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FEATURES

ROYAL BLOOD: AN INT. VIEW WITH CORPS

To celebrate our 100th issue, Rue Morque proudly presents the ongoing story of the genre's greatest living legend and the studio that made him an icon.

PLUS: Interviews with Hammer star Ingrid Pitt, the man who revived the company, Hammer 101, and more!

by JAMES BURRELL, SEAN PLUMMER, TREVOR TURNING and PAUL CORRUPE

13 YEARS OF FEAR

Rue Morque writers consult experts and luminaries for an in-depth look at how the genre has changed since we began publishing in 1997, and where it's headed.

by RUE MORQUE STAFF

THE NIGHTMARE GALLERY

We commissioned sixteen of the best dark artists out there to each create an original piece that exemplifies a personal nightmare, and tell us why the work haunts them. The results will scare you too.

curated by GARY PULLIN

HYMNS FROM THE HOUSE OF HORROR

One into Rue Morque Radio's first ever free downloadable terror tunes compilation, with a spotlight on all seventeen of the rare, classic, remixed and world premiere tracks! Hear what the bands themselves have to say about their caustic cuts.

by TREVOR TURNING, TOMS DRAGONIR and GAVIN ALEXANDER

GATHER 'ROUND, KIDDOES

During the 1990s, R.L. Stine's creepy children's books sold millions of copies. The often reclusive, incredibly prolific author tells his own spooky story.

by PHIL BROWN

ISCARES

Rue Morque downloads the top ten iPhone apps for horror fans.

by MARIE-EVE LAUREN



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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



AS AN AVID READER of *Rue Morgue* magazine and active *Rue Morgue* member, I can hardly express how impressed I was with RM#99. Literally every article piqued my interest. I must have read the entire issue from front to back in two hours. From the article on tattooist Paul Acker to *The Human Centipede* article, I couldn't take my eyes off the pages. I hadn't been so excited about an issue since your *Return of the Living Dead* article in RM#77! Both Gary Pulin and Justin Erickson completely outdid themselves with the Freddy cover, and I think I speak for everyone when I say another Rondo nomination is in their future. This issue is just another reminder of why I live and breathe all things horror, and will always be a faithful reader of *Rue Morgue*. To all the staff at RM, thanks again for another wonderful issue, and keep on doin' what you're doin'!

BRANDON LOVETT - HELL-IFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

I WANTED to personally thank you for the great review of our little movie that could, *Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated*. It is very reassuring that a large newsstand magazine would give micro-cinema the same attention as the big money productions, and it is an honour to be in *Rue Morgue*, as both a fan of the magazine and a creator. I did want to point out that the writer of the *NotLoR* review erroneously named our company "Wild Eye Pix" and not Wild Eye Releasing. Thank you again, and I look forward to presenting you with more productions.

ROB HAUSCHILD, WILD EYE RELEASING
- ADDRESS WITHHELD

WHEN I PICKED UP the latest issue of *Rue Morgue* and spotted Eric Veillette's review of *Orlok the Vampire*, I had to read it to find out what *Rue Morgue* thought of Keith Carter's film. Just one week earlier, my wife and I went to the 1st Annual Georgetown Horror Film Festival here in Connecticut. The "festival" featured four horror shorts, judged by special guest Keith Carter, followed by a showing of *Orlok the Vampire*. Before the film even started, I commented to my wife that I was confused as to why he was taking a directorial credit for Mumau's public domain film. We donned our 3-D glasses and settled in. Well, Eric summed it up best: besides adding new inter-titles, music and sound effects, as well as those ridiculous 1960s Batman bat-logos, this was nothing new for the *Orlok* fan. The 3-D was dreadful, and I had to take my glasses off to avoid a headache. Most of the people in attendance slowly trickled out, and

midway through, the chatter amongst those remaining began to drown out the film. Poor Keith looked annoyed and a bit sad, but was it our fault? No. In the end, a smattering of folks remained and Keith stopped back up to take questions. My wife and I quickly got the hell out of there. This movie was shit. Bravo to Eric for his honesty in reviewing it.

DAAN RICCHEZZA
- REDDING, CONNECTICUT

I'M WRITING to let you know how much I enjoyed the Paul Naschy tribute, a fitting send-off from *Rue Morgue*. I see that The Gore-Met provided another great list of must-watch films for true genre lovers. I have every one of the titles on the Naschy film list and then some. I thoroughly enjoyed the interview with Naschy, too. Thanks so very much for doing this for Naschy and his family and friends. He will be greatly missed. At least we still have his work to enjoy.

RICK SNYDER - COPENHAGEN, NEW YORK

I WANT to express my joy about RM#98's coverage of King Diamond ("The King"). I grew up in North Jersey and getting to see King Diamond and Merciful Fate tour was much easier because we lived just outside of New York City. That's what we would say when a King Diamond show was in town - "We are going to see The King." I remember hearing about Gene Simmons saying that King Diamond stole his makeup patterns and his character. Gene Simmons would have had to get on a stepladder to kiss King Diamond's ass in the talent department. Don't get me wrong, I love old KISS and their shows were cool, but no comparison to the creative genius of The King. P.S. I may have to send for another copy of RM#98 so I can cut out the pictures of The King and keep one murt like all my others!

ROB POLLARD - NOBLESVILLE, INDIANA

CHAS. BALUN WAS THE ULTIMATE horror fan. He knew what he liked and made no apologies for it. Chas. often saw the value in little-seen horror gems such as *Mountain of the Mole*, *Musgrave*. Personally, I found his love of cannibal films inspiring. Many of us also shared his love for *Fukci*. His movie reviews set the gold standard for all horror fans. In closing, the horror community has lost a powerful voice, a brilliant writer and artist, and the true heart and soul of a horror fan! He will be missed by us all.

SHAWN MELTON - ADDRESS WITHHELD



I'VE BEEN A HUGE FAN of horror movies since I was little (thanks to my mom) and for years have wanted to express my love of those movies, but have found it quite hard to do. I thought of getting tattoos but felt that the "permanent" dark themes may give people the wrong idea as to what kind of person I am. Then, because I play goalie in ice hockey, I thought I should get a mask painted in an all-horror theme! I found Steve Nash at eyecandy-diy.com and noticed that he has painted masks for a few NHLers such as Tim Thomas, Cam Ward, Jonathan Quick, etc., so I thought if he's good enough to paint for those guys I'm sure he'll be able to paint a mask for a pick-up goalie from Kingston. Steve is quite the horror fan himself and was thrilled to take on the project. We weren't able to fit all the art on the mask because I like way too many horror movies, but I think your readers will like what he did with the ones that did fit (*Evil Dead*, *Amityville Horror*, *House of 1000 Corpses*, *Friday the 13th*, *Shawn of the Dead* and *Battle Royale*). I also had to show love for my favourite horror magazine. Yep, you guessed it, *Rue Morgue*! Since you guys were awesome enough to publish one of my letters in RM#77 I felt it was only fair to repay the favour!

MIKE EDE - KINGSTON, ONTARIO

CORRECTION: We failed to credit Kevin Hodgsp of kevinhodgspackphotos.com for his live King Diamond photograph which appeared on p.25 of RM#98. *Rue Morgue* regrets the error.



Deadlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

INDIAN FILM PROMOTERS TAKE CUES FROM WILLIAM CASTLE

For all of the genre's we-dare-you-to-watch swagger, there's surprisingly little spectacle around English-language theatrical horror flicks today. Not since William Castle's stationing of ambulances outside screenings of 1959's *The Tanager* has there been such grandiose showmanship. But where has it all gone? Like many things, it's been outsourced to India.

This past February, big-name Indian filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma threw down the gauntlet to Indian moviegoers: sit through his new production of *Phoonk 2* alone, without getting scared, and collect 500,000 rupees (about \$11,000 USD).

"It is very much in the spirit of William Castle and I'm sure that [Varma], as a big student of film history, was well aware of the connection," says Pete Tombs, author of *Mondo Macabro*, the definitive text on international genre movies.

Phoonk 2, which opened in India in April, continues the story of Ragiv (actor/director Sudeep), a confirmed atheist who incurs the supernatural wrath of a witch.

Phoonk writer Milind Gokhale directed the sequel, while Varma executive produced it. Varma offered a similar reward to the brave soul who could sit through the 2008 original. While several news accounts suggest that the money was never actually delivered the first time around, many seemed keen to give the prize wheel of terror another spin.

This time, the contest was open to residents of India aged eighteen to 60 who applied via text message before April 10. The contestants were to be whittled down to a single person after medical screenings and a random draw. That person, hooked up to a heart-rate monitor and watched via night-vision camera (to discourage looking away during the scary bits), would then be placed in a theatre by him or herself to watch the movie.

If the heart rate remained the same as it was before the screening, the money would be awarded.

With India producing approximately 1000 movies each year, competition is fierce.

"Publicity stunts for movies are not unusual in India," says Tombs. "The film press there is a very important part of the promotional process, and anything to attract attention is welcomed."

A few days after Varma issued his challenge, rival director Vikram Bhatt (1920, *Rave*) told the Indian press that his latest shocker, *Shoop*, needed no such gimmicks to garner an audience. Then again, Bhatt asked local hospitals to have ambulances standing by outside theatres showing *Shoop*, just in case. "The weak-hearted in the audience may need medical attention," he told the website *mad-day.com*. "I want multiplexes to take necessary precautions." Sounds familiar.

"[Yet], when it comes to random promotions like these, Ram Gopal Varma is the man," says Sujoy Singha, who frequently blogs about the latest Bollywood trends for his London-based site, *oneknightsstands.net*. "I don't believe such an over-the-top promotion is common in India. I mean, yes, we have had some marketing campaigns, some quite radical ones, but not ones that offer money."

In fact, this type of carnival-barker promotion is traditionally pretty rare for India's home-grown horror flicks, in part because until very recently they've been fairly lowbrow, low-budget affairs, he says. Yet Bollywood's certainly been known to push the marketing boundaries on occasion to pack theatres for more mainstream cinematic events.



Phoonk 2 ups the ante on India's growing horror marketing theatrics

At the end of December, top-tier Bollywood star Aamir Khan promoted his comedy *3 Idiots* by disguising himself and visiting different cities and villages throughout the country, challenging his fans to find him. The prize, spending New Year's with the star and his friends. Sure, nobody won, but *3 Idiots* became the highest-grossing film in Indian history.

How's that heart rate, Mr. Varma?

A.S. BERMAN

KINETIK FEST AIMS TO MAKE MONTREAL TOP DESTINATION FOR INDUSTRIAL MUSIC FANS

If you like your music dark, loud and digitally crafted, it's time to brush up on your French. For seven days in May (11-17), fans of industrial and electronic music will descend upon Montreal for the third annual Kinetik Festival.

Developed out of the ashes of the similarly themed C.O.M.A. festival – which happened yearly from 2004 to 2007 but ran out of steam when the main organizer pulled out – Kinetik was first realized in 2008 by C.O.M.A. cohort Jean-Francois Fortin Gadoury. The one-time industrial DJ and his partners believed the concept of C.O.M.A., which only featured industrial and noise acts, could be expanded to include subgenres indicative of the constant evolution of electronic music.

"The first edition of the festival was only three days," says Gadoury, "but we were able to bring in a lot of bands that had never been to North America before [or not recently], like Feindflug and Nitzer Ebb. In 2009 we added a full night of EBM/synthpop and changed the festival to four days, attracting more than 2500 attendees. This year, probably out of craziness, we decided to make it over a five-day period – seven if you count the pre- and after-festival parties – and we hope to see up to 3500 people."

More than 70 percent of the advance tickets have sold outside of Montreal, as this year's Kinetik is expecting visitors from across North America, and as far away as Australia and Germany. Gadoury believes the stats are an indication that Kinetik is becoming a destination location for industrial enthusiasts, not unlike European electro-industrial festivals such as Wave Gotik Treffen and M'era Me Luna.

"A lot of people coming from the US are loyal fans from the past two years, and see this



Combichrist performs as part of *Harsh Industrial Night*, and (below) Covenant headlines *EBM/Synthpop Night*.

festival as the place to go to see all the 'industrial family' from North America," he explains. "Even when we do a 'big' event, fans can see most of the band members hanging out and chatting, since even for [the artists], it's one of the rare times where they can see all those shows in one place."

With 50 bands programmed by style, Gadoury is confident patrons will have no problems picking an evening tailored to their particular brand of musical poison. May 12 is *Electro Night* (headlined by Fixme/McCarthy); *Old School Industrial Night* brings the classic darkness on May 13 with *Leather Strip* and *The Gothscies*, among others; *Harsh Industrial Night* and *Noise Night* crank up the aural horror on May 14 and 15, respectively, with aggrotech demons Combichrist, Belgian noise heathens Hypnoskull and Alien Vampires; and *EBM/Synthpop Night* closes the festival's musical component on May 16 with headliners Covenant.

Kinetik's ethos, according to the festival website, is "a complete immersion via the inner force of electronics." Each show is heightened by live projections and interactive art expositions of various mediums (painting, drawing and mul-

timedia), but Kinetik isn't so highbrow it excludes the usual parade of colourful costumes and creature comforts one associates with such events.

"A lot of hands playing at the festival either use visuals from horror movies or look like serial killers on stage," says Gadoury. "The audience also plays a big role. The electro-industrial scene is a mix between the electro scene, goth scene, raver scene and cyber scene, and a lot of [fans] see this as a place to show off some unique ways to dress up."

According to Gadoury, more than twenty different vendors will be on hand at Kinetik, peddling everything from the expected (magazines, discs and T-shirts) to the unusual (gas masks). New this year will be the addition of garden and barbecue areas, with "goth-dogs and industrial-burgers" on the menu.

A Platinum pass for the week will run you \$280 CDN, but a multitude of ticket options are available at Kinetik's website, festival-kinetik.net, enabling attendees to take in one night, all seven or combinations thereof. If you're planning to stay the whole week, Gadoury advises comfortable footwear and a strong constitution may be in order: "We do hope that everyone's feet and livers will still be alive after this."

TREVOR TUMINSKI



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ROADKILL



Christopher Lee
Lord Dracula

youtube.com (search: Christopher Lee BBC4) If our Christopher Lee cover story has stoked your curiosity, here's something you can check out for extra credit: a four-part BBC4 documentary that reunited the cast and crew of *The Wicker Man* for a candid, in-depth look back at the making of the cult classic and the legacy it has spawned.

inthebloomingpodcasts.wordpress.com England's In the Blooming theatre troupe offers a no-dumb take on the radio plays of yesteryear by injecting large doses of black comedy into their original takes. Visit the company's blog to download episodes, examine scripts for past productions and track upcoming public performances. Die laughing!

homersociety.com Does Hollywood horror get you down? Well, the horror society, "your voice for independent horror," has your anti-establishment tendencies covered. This horror news site features all the usual stuff—reviews, interviews, trailers, contests, events listings—but with a decidedly low-budget bent.

litgothic.com If you're gaga for gothic horror fiction, then *The Literary Gothic* is an excellent launching point for your further explorations in fear. The site not only extensively lists gothic authors and works, but also provides links to further online resources and offers a brief primer for those interested in doing their own academic research of supernatural literature.

neonsculptures.com Sculptor Hix combines plastic, bone, bark, nails, clay, moss, liquid latex, preserved insects and more to create his morbid sculptures, which are inspired by everything from Egyptian mummies to the medical marvels housed at the Mutter museum. Visitors can view a variety of his creepy creations, as well as commission one for their own cabinet of curiosities.

Compiled by MONICA S. KUEHLER

Get a Roadkill suggestion? Email a link to: roadkill@the-magazine.com

NEW MEXICO TO HOST HORROR FILM BOOT CAMP

There's nothing new about filmmaking "boot camps"—institutions around the world have offered short, intensive film production programs for years. Visual effects artist Lee Stranahan, with the help of other horror filmmakers, is putting a new twist on the idea, however, with his Horror Film Boot Camp, which debuts this month in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Though Stranahan has organized several filmmaking and visual effects seminars in the past, this is his first attempt at a genre-specific camp. "As an indie filmmaker, horror is a great genre to explore...and I know a lot of people who work in the horror genre and are really passionate about it," he explains of how it came together.

Stranahan's associates include director Darren Lynn Bousman (*Saw II to IV*, *Repo! The Genetic Opera*) and visual effects artist Spooky Dax Walker (*Grace, Sinner*), both of whom will lead portions of the program. The camp will offer hands-on instruction on topics including writing and pre-production, makeup and prosthetic effects, choreographing fight scenes and selling your film. The idea is to give participants a basic, working knowledge of all aspects of horror film production in one weekend.

"You can spend four years and \$50,000 on film school if you want," says Walker, "but if you are ready to jump in and make a great horror film, on any budget, this weekend is going to be bloody great! We are not wasting your time discussing the merits of Bergman and Kubrick—you can read a book on film theory in your free time. We are getting right to the core of what makes horror work."

Horror Film Boot Camp is scheduled for May 7 to 9 and carries a \$1495 price tag (early registration was \$997). Stranahan is already planning a science fiction movie boot camp, and will continue to run visual effects and other filmmaking programs, whether or not the Horror Film Boot Camp gets another go will depend on the response to May's event. Check filmbootcamp.com for updates.

APRIL SNELLINGS

ENTRAILS

► **Filmmaker Charles B. Pierce** (*The Legend of Boggy Creek*) died March 5 in a Tennessee nursing home of natural causes. He was 71. Pierce is widely credited with pioneering the faux-documentary gimmick used in films such as *The Blair Witch Project* and *Paranormal Activity*. His 1973 docudrama-style shocker *The Legend of Boggy Creek*, made for only \$160,000, went on to gross \$25 million, making it one of the most successful independent films ever. Pierce returned to the horror genre in 1977 with *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*.

► **Tim Burton and Night Watch** (2004) director Timur Bekmambetov have snapped the rights to *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*. Seth Grahame-Smith's tongue-in-cheek historical horror novel (see review on p.82) was a hot topic in publishing trends last spring, when it netted the *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies* author a rumored half-million dollar advance. Burton and Bekmambetov will co-produce the film, with Grahame-Smith scripting; no director has been announced. Burton is also said to be developing a 3-D, stop-motion *Addams Family* feature that will have no connection to the television series or movie franchise. It will apparently stay closer to the wry wit and edgy tone of Charles Addams' classic cartoons.

► **If your urine is particularly rank**, your fifteen minutes could be just around the corner. Thorpe Park in Surrey, England recently invited visitors with exceptionally foul-smelling urine to donate samples for the *Sew Alve* attraction, a ride that will recreate six trips from the *Sew* franchise. The pee deemed most eye-wateringly offensive will be used

to stunk up the bathroom segment of the ride, in an attempt to create a "truly gut-wrenching sensory experience."

► **Exploitation auteur Frank Henenlotter** recently made his off-Broadway debut when he appeared in *The Gloria Glitter* show at New York City's Broadway Comedy Club. The ongoing weekly production, which combines scripted scenes with anything-goes improv, stars Beverly Bonner (*Basket Case*, *Frankenhooker*) as a bargain-basement late-night talk show hostess blissfully unaware of her irrelevance.

► **Paranormal Activity** creators Oren Peli, Jason Blum and Steven Schneider are teaming with Canada's Alliance Films for a five-picture run of low-budget horror films. First up is *Jealousy*, a haunted house tale that will reunite the original *Saw* creative team of James Wan and Leigh Whannell. (Peli, Blum and Schneider will produce.) *Jealousy* is slated to begin shooting this spring, with Wan lensing Whannell's script. Plot details are being kept under wraps.

► **Former Pantera frontman and Housecore Records founder Phil Anselmo** is penning a horror blog over at Bloody-Disgusting.com. A diehard genre fan and self-styled horror historian, Anselmo will highlight a different fright flick in each installment of his monthly column. He recently kicked off the feature with a list of his favourite horror films, including *Evil Dead*, *Zombi* and the more obscure Italian film *The House with Laughing Windows*.

APRIL SNELLINGS

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CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO.

100

- When 45-year-old Australian mime Wayne Gondo dropped dead of a heart attack mid-performance during the summer of 1996, it took the audience several minutes to realize that his collapse was not part of the act.
- Muhammad Ali publicly dedicated his 1976 "Thrilla in Manila" fight against Joe Frazier to his friend Christopher Lee, who at the time was watching the bout at the Playboy Mansion with another friend of his, Hugh Hefner.
- A recent study conducted by Pew Research discovered that 16 percent of Americans believe in the "evil eye" and other curses.
- James Bond author Ian Fleming and Christopher Lee were step-cousins and Fleming had originally envisioned the actor in the titular role in 1960's *Dr. No*. While this didn't work out, Lee was later cast as the assassin Scaramanga in 1974's *The Man with the Golden Gun*.
- A California moviegoer was stabbed in the neck with a meat thermometer at a screening of *Shutter Island* after he complained about a woman using her cellphone during the film.
- Christopher Lee turned down an offer to play Dr. Sam Loomis in *Halloween*. He would later tell director John Carpenter that it was one of the biggest mistakes of his career.
- After the recent *SeaWorld* trainer death in Florida, the American Family Association called for the killer whale to be stoned to death. This is how the Bible advises dealing with animals that kill.
- Before appearing in more than a dozen films together, Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing both had roles in *Hamlet* (1948) and *Moulin Rouge* (1952), though they never crossed paths during either of the shoots.
- Earlier this year, a Southern Ontario man died of hypothermia after trekking out into the woods, allegedly trying to survive with only the knowledge he obtained from watching Discovery Channel's *Survivorman*.
- Christopher Lee has a crooked finger, the result of an injury during a sword fight with Errol Flynn on the set of *The Dark Avenger* (1955).
- A North Korean factory worker was publicly executed by firing squad in March for contacting an out-of-country friend via an illegal cellphone and discussing the price of rice and his current living conditions.
- Several popular Hammer players have gone on to roles in the *Star Wars* franchise: Christopher Lee played Count Dooku in *Star Wars Episodes II and III*, David Prowse was Darth Vader in *Episodes IV to VI*, and Peter Cushing was Grand Moff Tarkin in *Star Wars Episode IV*.
- Patients at Heartlands Hospital in the UK recently endured the slouch of decaying bodies when three people in one ward died in relatively quick succession and the hospital took more than seven hours to remove the deceased from their beds.

Compiled by MONICA S. KUEBLER and JAMES BURRELL
Get a weird stat or morbid fact? Send it through to info@horror-magazine.com

THE RUE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX

CHRISTOPHER LEE DRACULA DEATHS

- HORROR OF DRACULA**
DISINTEGRATED TO DUST
- DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE**
CRUCIFIX CLIFF DIVE
- DRACULA A.D.**
STABBED BY COACH SPOKE (PROLOGUE)
- SCARS OF DRACULA**
SPEARED, STRUCK BY LIGHTNING, SET ON FIRE, SAILS OFF ROOF
- DRACULA A.D.**
STAKE PIT SLIP
- TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA**
POWDERED BY ALTAR-POWER



JAMES FISHER zineofhorror.com

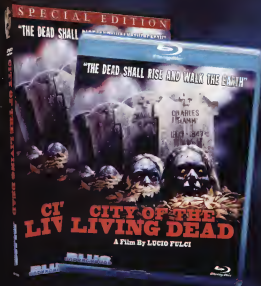
TORTURED TAGLINES

DRACULA A.D. 1972:

"THE COUNT IS BACK, WITH AN
EYE FOR LONDON'S HOT PANTS...
AND A TASTE FOR EVERYTHING."



NEW HIGH DEFINITION HORROR!



EXTRAS

- *The Making of CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD* - Interviews with Star **Catriona MacColl**, Co-Star **Michelle Sassi**, Production Designer **Massimo Antonelli Gelsom**, Assistant Makeup Effects Artist **Rosario Prestipino**, Special Effects Artist **Gino De Rosi**, Cinematographer **Sergio Salvati**, and Camera Operator **Roberto Forges Davanzati**
- *Acting Among the Living Dead* - Interview with Star **Catriona MacColl** (Blu-ray Exclusive)
- *Entering the Gates of Hell* - Interview with Star **Giovanni Lombardo Radice** (Blu-ray Exclusive)
- *Memoires of the Maestro* - The cast and crew reminisce about working with **Lucio Fulci** (Blu-ray Exclusive)
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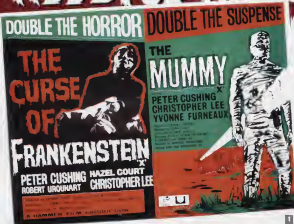
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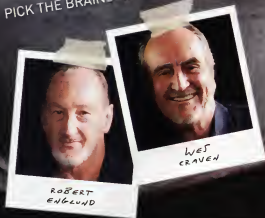
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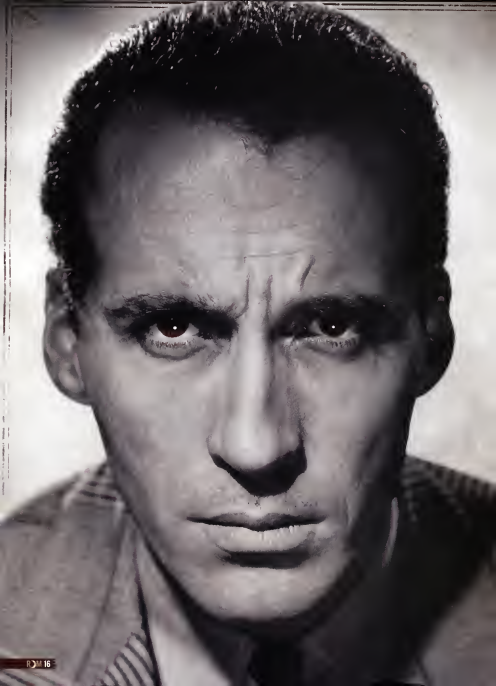
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TO CELEBRATE OUR 100TH ISSUE, *RUE MORQUE* PROUDLY PRESENTS THE ONGOING STORY OF THE GENRE'S GREATEST LIVING LEGEND AND THE STUDIO THAT MADE HIM AN ICON.

Rue Morque Blood

of an Iconic and Iconic
Christopher Lee

BY JAMES BURRELL

SAY THE WORDS "GENRE ROYALTY" AND ONE NAME IS BOUND TO COME UP MORE THAN ANY OTHER: CHRISTOPHER LEE.

Make that Sir Christopher Lee, as the 87-year-old icon was knighted last year, for good reason. With a career that has spanned seven decades and is still going strong, the legendary actor has played everything from swashbuckling pirates, to insidious villains, to revered political leaders. But it is his work in the horror, science fiction and fantasy genres that has built his most loyal fan base. Although known to the average modern moviegoer as villains Saruman, in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and Count Dooku, in the *Star Wars* prequels, Lee remains — to horror fans, at least — closely identified with the roles he played for England's Hammer Studios, particularly that of Count Dracula. He donned the fangs seven times for the company over the course of sixteen years (plus once for director Jess Franco, and later he even played Vlad the Impaler for a documentary).

Of aristocratic ancestry himself, Christopher Frank Carandini Lee was born on May 27, 1922 in the district of Belgrave in Westminster, England. His mother, Estelle Marie Carandini, was an Italian contessa, his father, Geoffrey Lee, was a lieutenant-colonel with Britain's 60th King's Royal Rifle Corps. When he was four, Lee's parents separated, with his mother later marrying Harcourt Rose, a banker and relation to James Bond creator Ian Fleming. Graduating from Wellington College, where he majored in classical studies, Lee went on to serve in World War II in Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF), and as an intelligence officer with the British army. After he retired from the RAF at the end of the war, he was encouraged by his mother's cousin Nicolò Carandini, the Italian ambassador to Britain, to try acting.

Securing a seven-year contract with the Rank Organisation in 1946, Lee's first role was a bit part in the 1948 romantic mystery *Corridor of Mirrors*. Other small roles followed in such films as Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1948) and *Moulin Rouge* (1952) — both of which featured his future friend and regular co-star, Peter Cushing. But quality parts eluded

the 6'5" Lee, who was frequently told that he was "too tall" and "too foreign-looking" to land leading man roles, so he was forced to make do with bit parts. That changed when budding independent British studio Hammer Films cast him in its version of *Frankenstein*. Finally, his height was an advantage.

Released in 1957, *The Curse of Frankenstein* was Hammer's first foray into gothic horror — a genre for which it would become world renowned. Directed by Terence Fisher, the film starred Cushing (who had achieved fame in the 1954 BBC TV production of *Morean Eighty-Four*) in the role of the calculating, murderous Baron Frankenstein. As the "Creature," Lee found himself beneath layers of patchwork makeup.

Even without dialogue, the actor, like Boris Karloff before him in Universal's *Frankenstein*, conveyed a sense of pathos that made the monster ultimately far less evil than its creator. Featuring dismembered limbs, heaving bosoms and a liberal sprinkling of "Kensington Gore" (theatrical glee) — all in blood-red Technicolor — the film was vilified by critics but a huge box office hit nonetheless. (See *Classic Cut* p.98 for more on the movie.)

Naturally, it wasn't long before Hammer had its sights on updating another horror classic. *Horror of Dracula* (1958) featured Lee, in what would become his signature role, as the Transylvanian Count, with Cushing as his arch-nemesis, Professor Van Helsing. Lee's *Dracula* was a great departure from that of his screen predecessor Bela Lugosi. Vested with a blatant sexuality, his *Dracula* was athletic, animalistic and, perhaps most important to the story, attractive to his female victims, who anticipated his nocturnal visits. The character was further updated with the addition of fangs and red contact lenses. The film was an even bigger smash than *Curse* and cemented Lee's reputation as a horror star.

Rounding out Hammer's original trilogy of classic monster reboots was *The Mummy*, which again re-learned Lee with Cushing. In the 1959

film, Lee took a turn as the formidable yet tragic mummy Khans and conveyed a sense of sadness and suffering through his eyes and gestures alone. Throughout the '60s, Lee played a number of other memorable characters for Hammer, including the title role in *Rasputin, The Mad Monk* (1966) and, in a rare turn, the hero of *The Devil Rides Out* (1968), in which the incorruptible Duc de Richleieu must battle a coven of devil worshippers to save the soul of a friend.

When it came to his signature role, Lee played Dracula four more times before the end of the decade in *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (1966), *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1968), *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (1969) and *Scars of Dracula* (1970). In each film, his screen time was limited (he had no dialogue at all in *Scars of Darkness*), but this was made up for by increasingly elaborate vampire death scenes, such as being impaled on a large golden crucifix, drowning in his own most and bursting into flames after being struck by a bolt of lightning.

Some of Lee's most personally rewarding work came about in the '70s, as he moved away from gothic horror. In 1973 he played one of his favourite parts, the pagan leader Lord Summerisle in Robin Hardy's cult masterpiece *The Wicker Man*. The following year saw Lee take on the role of assassin Scaramanga opposite Roger Moore in the James Bond entry *The Man with the Golden Gun*, and he guest hosted NBC's *Saturday Night Live* in 1978, demonstrating his flair for comedy.

Gradually appearing in fewer productions for Hammer (studio star Ingrid Pitt discusses working for the company in its heyday on p.20), Lee grudgingly agreed to make two final Dracula flicks, *Dracula A.D. 1972* (1973) and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1974), which saw the Count in 1970s London. Lee's last film for the company – until it was recently reborn after going on hiatus in the mid-'80s – was *To the Devil... A Daughter* in 1976.

I never thought I would make my name playing villainous characters.

Christopher Lee

Over the next couple of decades he appeared in a steady stream of films and television projects, but it was a small role in Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) that edged him back into the limelight for younger generations. His pivotal part in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–2003) marked the start of a major career revival that resulted in scores of new fans. This revival was further spurred on by his villainous turn as Count Oooku in the *Star Wars* prequels *Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002) and *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005).

In addition, the life-long music lover has sung in several of his films, including *The Wicker Man*, has collaborated with a number of metal bands (including Manowar and Rhapsody), and has just released a new symphonic metal album titled *Chariotmagie: By the Sword and the Cross* (see p.24). The multilingual actor (he's fluent in eight languages) has also provided voice work for video games and lent his distinct baritone narration to scores of film, television and radio projects.

Once declared the "most bankable star in the world," by USA Today, Lee is as busy as ever with several projects in the works, including *The Resident* – the first feature release from the relaunched Hammer Films (see p.23) and *The Wicker Tree* – the follow-up to *The Wicker Man*.

Sir Christopher Lee granted *Rue Morgue* an extensive interview from his home in England – in which his commanding voice described a career of unparalleled distinction.



You were recently knighted, so how does it feel to be known as Sir Christopher Lee?

Well, I was surprised, to say the least. Obviously, very pleased, particularly for my family. But I was surprised because I didn't expect somebody of my age to receive this honour. Otherwise, I haven't changed in any way.

At 87, you're more in demand now than ever it seems, and I've read that you're the most prolific actor of all time, with the most screen credits – well over 300 of them.

I don't think the comment about being the most prolific actor of all time with the most screen credits is entirely correct. I remember the late John Carradine, with whom I worked, once telling me he had over 400. But I think that when he started, early on, they were doing very short films. I don't know what you'd call them – "two-reelers." I think I can only say that that's what he told me.

As mentioned in your autobiographies, you're actually a very unlikely movie star in many ways. How did you break into the business?

I started as an actor at the end of '48 and I didn't know anything at all. Absolutely nothing about acting. I guess that happens with everyone when they do their first job. I wanted to learn very much and I did everything I could, even sweeping the floor of the stage and acting as the assistant stage manager, which was good training. It took me about ten years before I was really aware of what to do in front of the camera. And I'm still learning today because there are different, new methods of making a film: new lenses, new lights, CGI, all sorts of things which didn't exist when I started. But originally I was told that I was much too tall to be an actor, which I think is an odd thing to say. If I had been an American, I don't think my height would have been a drawback, but it certainly was here [in England] for quite a long time because I was taller than just about every British actor, including some of the stars. So, I thought, "Well, I'm not going to let this kind of comment get me down." I'm a very determined sort of person, and so I just did everything I could, everywhere I could. I was working in amateur productions – with sometimes just one line, sometimes two – until I gradually built, and built, and built my resume. It wasn't until about 1956 or '57 that my name and face became familiar to the flapping public.

So you weren't "a natural"?

When I first started, I was not at all a good actor. In fact, at times I was lumbie. I got a contract with the Rank Organisation starting at ten pounds a week. Not exactly what you would call a mountain of gold. And if I could get to a studio and watch, I did my best to watch the very good actors and, if given the chance, the very good directors, too. I was learning, learning, learning all the time. That's one of the secrets of being a very good actor: learning, so that you have experience and knowledge behind you when the opportunity comes.

How would you compare your career now with the one you envisioned for yourself when you first started out?

Well, I never thought I would make my name playing villainous characters. It just happened. I never dreamed about being a juvenile lead or a romantic lead – that's just not me. I just took every opportunity that came along. And those first ten years were the making of me as an actor, one who really knew what was going on behind the camera as well as in front of it.

Let's talk about your return to Hammer. You recently completed *The Resident*, with Hilary Swank – your first film for the reborn studio in approximately 35 years. Now does it feel to be back on a Hammer film?

Well, it was something that I never expected would happen. I congratulate the people who are running Hammer now for having the name restarted and for making motion pictures again. It's a strange feeling in a way, it's like coming full circle. And what I did with Hilary Swank wasn't a very great deal, but I think that she's a very fine actress, and I think that [co-star] Jeffrey Dean Morgan is a very fine actor. So, it was a pleasant surprise, really. I had to travel a long way to do it, to Albuquerque, New Mexico. I think it will be a very good film, slightly along the lines of – but not in terms of devilish possession or anything like that – *Rosemary's Baby*. I'm not saying it's the same, because it isn't. But it's a very strange, unsettling film, and was very demanding for the leading players. My part was a short part, but a very meaningful one.

Was this Hammer experience like slipping on an old glove, so to speak, or was it something completely different?

Cont'd on page 22.

The Looks of Lee: (top to bottom) As *Crucifix* (with Caroline Munro) in *Dracula A.D. 1872*, as August (with Jeffrey Dean Morgan) in *The Resident*, as *Duc de Richelieu* (with Sarah Lemoine, Paul Edington and Patrick Mower) in *The Devil Rides Out*, and, supposedly, as the Creature from *The Curse of Frankenstein*.



BEAUTIFUL WOMEN WERE INTEGRAL TO HAMMER'S IMAGE. GENRE ICON *Ingrid Pitt* AND HISTORIAN *Marcus Hearn* EXAMINE WHAT IT MEANT TO BE ONE OF THE COMPANY'S BLEEDING LADIES.

Heroines, Hellspawn, Heaving Chests

BY SEAN PLUMMER

MARCUS HEARN HAS THOUGHT LONG AND HARD ABOUT WHAT

constituted a Hammer girl back in the studio's heyday, half a century ago, and the author of *Hammer Glamour*, a history of the starlets who helped sell Hammer's particular brand of English gothic romanticism, sees little connection to the walfish actresses who populate modern film.

"There was a particular look to a Hammer girl," he says by phone from England, "and it's not really the way that many contemporary actresses are encouraged to look. A Hammer girl was voluptuous. She was very curvy, very busty, very tall and very statuesque. A lot of the girls are actually quite chunky. In fact, when Madeline Smith first auditioned for *The Vampire Lovers*, she was asked to come back when she had put some weight on. It's hard to imagine a producer telling an actress something like that nowadays. Our perceptions of what constituted sexy bodies in those days were rather different."

Regardless, the women of Hammer are more popular in 2010 than they were 40 years ago. Ingrid Pitt, who starred in two of Hammer's infamous "lesbian vampire" films, 1970's *The Vampire Lovers* and 1971's *Countess Dracula*, believes that Hammer's female stars are remembered "fantastically well." She explains, via an email interview, "Hammer hasn't made a real film for about 35 years, but most of the girls who did one end went to [do public appearances] can turn up at a convention and be assured of a warm welcome."

Hearn agrees: "Some of these girls feel they have a higher profile now than they had when they were actually working." And he would know, seeing as he's worked with the studio since 1984, edited a Hammer magazine and published three books about the company and its legacy. The idea for *Hammer Glamour* (Titan Books, released last fall), came about when Hearn discovered hundreds of publicity photos of the starlets and decided that a tome about them was in order.

"Hammer reserved most of its colour publicity photography for what we would call 'glamour shots' because, for Hammer, sex was a very important marketing tool," he says. "Sex was just as important to many of the films as horror."

Indeed. And as Hammer, which was founded in 1934, found itself being reinvented in the public imagination as a purveyor of horror with the release of 1955's *The Quatermass Experiment* (the first X-certificate horror film in England) and 1957's *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Hammer's first colour film), the studio began to put more time and money into finding and publicizing its female stars.





But while the women of Hammer often figured prominently into the appeal of its horror films, that didn't mean that the studio wanted to develop them long-term. Even the best-known actresses associated with Hammer — Caroline Munro (*Countdown to Vampire Hunter*), Rachel Welch (*One Million Years B.C.*), Ursula Andress (*She*), Veronica Carlson (*Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed*) and Pitt (*The Vampire Lovers*) — rarely did more than a few movies with the studio, as Hammer was always on the lookout for younger and cheaper talent.

"Hammer preferred to nurture new talent rather than pay for existing stars," says Hearn, "because stars were extremely expensive. The women in the films were often discovered by Hammer and then just as quickly discarded."

For her part, Pitt, whom Hearn describes in his book as "the most emblematic of all the leading ladies associated with Hammer," was hoping for a more prestigious gig after starring opposite Richard Burton and Clint Eastwood in 1968's *Where Eagles Dare* than the lesbian vampire she portrayed in *The Vampire Lovers*.

"To be truthful, I felt that doing a horror film after being in the big international blockbuster *Where Eagles Dare* was a bit of a setback. I was looking for another *Eagles* but with a better credit. I enjoyed working at Hammer and, of course, hoped to do more with them if they wanted me. Unfortunately, I got embroiled in the politics of filmland."

Pitt's involvement with Hammer coincided with a turning point in how the studio approached depictions of sexuality onscreen. Censorship restrictions in Britain in the '50s and '60s, Hearn says, meant that Hammer "had to rely on suggestion and erotica and suspense because censors would not allow them to be as explicit as they wanted to." Hence the hawking bosoms and low-cut dresses of early Hammer horror starlets such as Hazel Court and Barbara Shelley.

But that relatively modest approach went out the window in 1970 with changes to Britain's X certificate, which allowed more graphic depictions of sex and violence onscreen. The first Hammer film to "benefit" from the changes was *The Vampire Lovers*, a loose adaptation of the Sheridan Le Fanu novella *Carmilla*. The film became famous for the nudity of its stars, Ingrid Pitt and Michael Smith, and its depiction of lesbian sex.

Despite its success, says Hearn, "I think a lot of old school Hammer enthusiasts would regard it as where things started to go wrong. ... James Carreras, the managing director of Hammer, said to Anthony Hinds, the executive producer, 'It's wonderful. We can do anything we want now.' And Anthony Hinds said, 'I'm not sure that's such a great thing.'"

Hinds may have been right. The censorship changes coupled with the withdrawal of financial support from American distributors in the late '60s, as well as the decision by Hollywood to make their own horror films instead of subcontracting them to the likes of Hammer, meant that the studio had less money to make movies and had to compete with Hollywood product. The increasing explicitness of the company's output was a foregone conclusion.

Hearn says, "The whole process became quite accelerated and reached its conclusion with a naked teenage nun in [1976's] *To the Devil a Daughter*. There's literally nowhere to go after that."

Until now, perhaps. The recent resurrection of the Hammer name by the Exclusive Media Group means that a new generation of Hammer starlets could be on the horizon, although the new Hammer's current slate of films, which includes the Hilary Swank thriller *The Resident* and the American remake of the acclaimed Swedish vampire film *Let the Right One In*, shows little interest in reviving the idea of Hammer glamour.

"It's a very difficult situation the new producers find themselves in," says Hearn, "having to reinvent Hammer horror for a modern audience in a way that doesn't actually betray the legacy."

Pitt, who filmed a cameo for the new Hammer's first production, an "interactive web serial" called *Beyond the Rive*, is less diplomatic.

"I arrived at a dilapidated warehouse in the middle of the night, sat around in a cold and musty room for about four hours, then went onto a set for approximately 25 minutes and was waved the long goodbye," she says. "Perhaps I did feel a little bit exploited about that. It was obvious the new Hammer lot were only interested in using my name. I believe my cameo wasn't even in the finished film, although my name was still in the publicity. Damn! I've been exploited!"

The question of whether or not Hammer exploited its female stars is a fair one to ask, especially regarding its final days when producers Michael Style and Harry Fine, who "belonged to a rather more exploitative tradition," according to Hearn, started directing the studio's affairs.



Once Bitten: Ingrid Pitt in *The Vampire Lovers*, (below) Veronica Carlson and Christopher Lee in *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave*, and (opposite) Ingeborg Bergman in *Land for a Vampire*.

"I didn't speak to anyone who regretted taking part in a Hammer film," Hearn says. "I didn't meet anyone who felt they were exploited. I really was expecting to when I started out. I really thought I'd meet some people who were embarrassed maybe or regretted the fact they'd done it, but they were all extremely grateful to Hammer for what they had done for them. I guess these films are, for these girls, a souvenir in a way. And they've actually been a more lasting legacy than they could ever have expected, because I think having a [role] in a Hammer horror is probably second only to having done a Bond film."

For her part, Ingrid Pitt never felt exploited by the old Hammer regime. Indeed, despite its increasing reliance on nudity and graphic violence in the early '70s, she knew exactly what she was signing up for.

"How can you be exploited?? You are offered a job [if you are extremely lucky], you are told what the part is and what is expected of you and the input into your bank account if you agree. If you are happy with that when you sign on the dotted line, how can anyone exploit you? Do scientists feel exploited when they split the atom or bank managers when they pick up their million quid bonuses? I really must withdraw to a dark room and consider how and when someone who agrees to do something can be exploited." ☹





It was like making another movie. It so happens that – and I suppose it was late in a way – that it was a Hammer picture.

Why did you agree to make this film?

The script. And I think it would have been the same no matter which company would have made it. It was not a testing of "I have been here before." The nearest approach to it – although it's a different story – would have been a film I made with Susan Strasberg called *Taste of Fear* [aka *Scream of Fear*]. That's what this is, a psychological thriller.

Are you interested in making another film with Hammer?

Oh, yes. Everything depends for me now on the story, the script, the director, the cast and the part. Can I do something which will make its mark and which people will remember after they've seen the film? That applies, I think, to every film I do. I don't do long parts in films anymore, and I don't take immense journeys, like I did [for] *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*, to New Zealand and Australia. But those are the reasons why I accept a job.

Hammer is, of course, celebrated for its classic gothic tales. Is there a place for that type of horror film nowadays? How do you think genre filmmaking has changed?

Well, I never really looked upon them as "horror" films, I looked upon them as fantasies. But there is always a place for that genre; it's possibly the most popular in cinema. But I haven't done a "horror" film for many, many years. My last film for Hammer [prior to *The Resident*] was shot in 1975, and was *To the Devil a Daughter* with Richard Widmark and Nadazda Kinski. There is a place for unsettling films today and a lot of them are being made, but the ones that I don't even watch or would wish to appear in go into such specific and horrifying detail. The screen seems to be swash in blood and mutilation, which I find very unattractive. It doesn't keep the audience guessing, which is the most important thing of all. That's why *Taste of Fear* is such a good film. The audience doesn't know what is going on, and at the end it's made clear: it is kind of like a Hitchcock film; he didn't tell you everything until the ending. He was one of the greatest, and he made some very frightening films. I personally always try to surprise the audience by doing something or saying something that they don't expect. Today, they don't have to, it's all there on the screen from the very beginning.

I always thought of the classic Hammer films as being kind of like fairy tales, in a way. They have a quality to them that many of the more graphic films don't have.

I've used that phrase before too: fairy stories, fantasies. Many of them were criticized heavily by the press, but now, of course, they've become classics.

What's your favourite classic horror movie?

I can tell you what I think is the most frightening film I have ever seen. *Rose-*



Wicked Ways: Lee's vampire embraces Lucy Westerna (*Soleiled Miroirs*) in Jess Franco's *Count Dracula*, and (below) a baby-sacrificing outtake from *To the Devil a Daughter*



mary's Baby. And the best film I've ever seen would be *The Night of the Hunter*. They are both wonderful, wonderful films.

Would you say that the "horror" genre still interests you today as an actor?

It's done by suggestion. Only if it's done by keeping the audience in suspense.

It's well known that you became disillusioned with playing Dracula so many times...

Not all that much. Some people seem to think I played him over ten times. I did become disillusioned, and said so publicly in my autobiography. But I think you should know why I never played the part on the screen – except in the Spanish film *Count Dracula* – the way Bram Stoker described him. I never was able, except in that one film, to deliver Stoker's lines or words. I didn't even look like the character Stoker described: an old man with white hair dressed entirely in black, without a single speck of colour. Hammer gave me a cape. The first cape was black, and from then on, they decided to line it with scarlet. There was an eight-year period between the first

one [*Horror of Dracula*] and the second [*Dracula, Prince of Darkness*]. In the second one I didn't speak at all because the script was so weird. I told them, "I can't say these lines." After that, I was approached again, and again, and again by Hammer, and I turned them all down. I said, "You're getting away from Stoker's story, I'm hardly being asked to do anything, and my screen appearances are limited. It's not Stoker's *Dracula*, I don't want to do it." Then I got these telephone calls [from then-Hammer head James Carreras], and every time I said no. And they told me, "You've got to do it." And I would say, "No, I don't have to do it. Why are you insisting?" The answer I got was, "Well, we've already sold this to the American distributor with you in the part." This was before I even saw a script or was asked. Then, worst of all, I was told that if I didn't do these films, I would be putting very large numbers of people out of work. That's the only reason I did them.

If you had to do it all over again, would you have been more firm in your refusal to play Dracula those last few times?

Yes, I think I would have. Play it once for Hammer and once for Jess Franco, with a proper budget so we could really have told Stoker's story. I do say Stoker's lines in that version, not enough, but many of them. Nobody's done it, you know. Nobody has done the story exactly as Stoker wrote it.

The Franco film that you mentioned, 1970's *Count Dracula*, does indeed contain more elements from the book than any other film version I've seen.

You're quite right. I was an old man who got younger and younger with blood. And that of course, was the idea behind it.

There was also some very good talent in it. Klaus Kinski and Herbert Lom...

Neither of whom I met.

Yes, I read that you had filmed your acquaintances with Herbert Lom on completely different days.

I don't even think he had arrived before I finished. Nor did Klaus Kinski. I think.

Your most famous collaborator, of course, was Peter Cushing, who played Professor Van Helsing to your *Dracula* on several occasions. And for your last two *Dracula* films, *Dracula, A.D. 1972* and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*, many critics at the time said the re-banning of you both were their only saving grace.

Oh, those were a big mistake and I've always said so – about bringing the character into the modern era. But, who am I to criticize? I thought that it was a degeneration. And it was.



THE HOUSE OF HAMMER HAS A NEW CARETAKER. PRESIDENT/CEO Simon Oakes
REVEALS HOW HE'S REBUILDING THE STUDIO WITH NEW MONSTERS AND SOME FAMILIAR FACES.

Hammer

Has Risen From
Grave

SEAN PLUMMER

**NEW SIMON OAKES DECIDED TO REVIVE BRITAIN'S MOST FAMOUS
GENRE STUDIO. HE ASKED HIMSELF A PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT
QUESTION: "WHAT WOULD HAMMER BE LIKE TODAY?"**

Speaking to *Rue Morgue* from his home in London, the enthusiastic businessman says it was his lifelong "love affair" with Hammer that drove his desire to revive the company when the rights came up. He recognized the ongoing value of the company's legacy, as "the brand that never dies," yet he also understood the importance of letting go of some of the more quaint notions of the Hammer legacy, such as the sort of cottage industry style of filmmaking that defined its heyday, in order to remain current.

"I guess that the world doesn't work like that anymore," says Oakes. "That goes back to what I call the repertory family nature of Hammer. ... I think to be able to replicate that nowadays is very, very difficult, and I think the genre has moved on."

The iconic British studio produced some of the most memorable horror films of the '50s and '60s, making stars of Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing in the process. But by the early 1970s, Hammer's brand of English gothic romanticism, born out of 1950s censorship restrictions, had fallen out of favour. Its productions, aided by changes to Britain's film ratings system, became increasingly explicit in order to compete with their bigger-budgeted Hollywood cousins. This resulted in the exploitative likes of 1971's *Twins of Evil* (starring Playboy models and real-life twins Mary and Madeline Collinson) and 1971's *Lust for a Vampire* (starring the frequently nude Yutte Stenstaad). Hammer's last horror film—and, some would argue, its moral nadir—was 1976's ill-received *The Devil a Daughter*, which featured a nude fifteen-year-old Nastassja Kinski.

The financially strapped company made a few more films in the '70s and a couple of television anthologies in the 1980s before entering a period of dormancy. Various attempts through the '90s and the early part of the new century to resurrect Hammer stumbled until Oakes, an experienced film executive, and his partner Marc Schipper acquired the Hammer name in 2007. They then asked Nigel Sinclair

and Guy East, co-founders of the successful indie film producer/distributor Intermedie, to join their board and create the Exclusive Media Group, Hammer's new holding company.

Now, beams Oakes, "Hammer is my day job!"

His company's first production was *Beyond the Rave* (2008), an "interactive web serial" that premiered on MySpace in a bid to spread the Hammer name to a younger generation. Hammer's first two theatrical productions are scheduled for release later this year: Psychological thriller *The Resident*, co-starring Oscar-winner Hilary Swank (*Million Dollar Baby*) and Jeffrey Dean Morgan (*Watchmen*) is out August 27 in the UK, and *Let Me In*, the English-language remake of the Swedish vampire novel and film *Let the Right One In* (RMA84) is scheduled for October 1 in North America.

"We have not in any way Hollywood-ized it, as people have talked about," Oakes insists of the remake, which features a bloodsucker vastly different from the satin cape-wearing archetype of classic Hammer productions. "It is not rammed full of CGI and special effects. It is, as you know, at its heart a love story, and I think that's what appealed to people. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised."

To appeal to long-time Hammer fans, the company has included some of its classic players in the new productions. *Beyond the Rave* features a cameo from Ingrid Pitt, while *The Resident* has Christopher Lee in it.

"To my mind, it was a lovely way of connecting the heyday of Hammer with what I'm trying to do, which is to rebuild the brand," explains Oakes.

And that brand remains valuable. While the company is dedicated to producing original works (other planned projects include a film version of Susan Hill's best-selling horror novel *The Woman in Black*), Oakes also wishes to revisit some of Hammer's most popular characters—including potentially Captain Kronos, from 1974's *Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter*, and Professor Bernard Quatermass, of the 1967 sci-fi/horror hybrid *Quatermass and the Pit*. He feels they can speak to contemporary audiences.

"You could just leave a great brand like Hammer in aspic and say, 'Well, that was then and this is now,'" he reasons. "Or what you can do is you can bring it back to life again, you can pay homage to the past. You actually make the older films more accessible and available to younger people who haven't seen them... and I think that we should celebrate that."

New Blood: Hammer President/CEO Simon Oakes, and (below) Emma Woodford as Anna in *Beyond the Rave*



Did you get along with Peter right away? Was it an instant friendship? It was immediate, yes.

And you both made so many films together that I think some audiences used to forget that he had a very distinguished career making films apart from you.

Oh, yes. And also, he got an award for the BBC production of [George Orwell's] *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and he was superb. And of course, he had a lot more stage experience than I ever had and will ever have now, as I'm too old.

You also had a close relationship with Vincent Price. Actually, your birthday and Vincent's are both on the same day, on—

The 27th of May

And Peter's was one day earlier, on—

The 26th

Was there anything that the three of you would do to celebrate the occasion?

Oh yes, we would have conversations. And send birthday cards and do things like that.

I read that you would phone Peter up and talk in Looney Tunes cartoon characters' voices such as Sylvester the Cat or Yosemite Sam. Is that true?

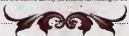
Yes! [Laughs] That is absolutely true. I would imitate these characters and he, when he answered the telephone—I don't think Peter liked the telephone very much—he would immediately know who it was because I would only have to say a few words as one of these characters and he would be helpless with laughter. He was a wonderful man, a wonderful human being. And a magnificent actor. And so was Vincent. So was Boris [Karloff].

As one of those genre icons, are there any villainous characters that you would have loved to play but didn't get the chance?

The only other character I would have liked to have played—because he wasn't just a monster, he was also a very intelligent man—would have been *Nan the Terrible*. But he was so superbly done by the Russians, I'm not sure I would have taken it on. That's about the only one, really. It's very difficult for me now to find anything that I haven't



My Best Friend: Lee and Orwell behind the scenes of 1973's *The Satanic Rites of Graculus*, and (below) Lee and Joanna Lumley (as Jessica Van Helsing) in the same film



CHRISTOPHER LEE

Charlemagne: By the Sword and the Cross

Charlemagne Productions, Ltd.

Charlemagne: By the Sword and the Cross finds Sir Christopher Lee finding his talents in the musical arena with an homage to King Charlemagne, the First Holy Roman Emperor. Lee is a direct descendant of the King, so who better to recount his medieval tale, especially in the timbre of that elegant baritone? Arranged as five distinct acts, with narration by Lee's daughter, Christina, to frame the concept, *Charlemagne* casts Sir Christopher as the King's ghost with a supporting cast of accomplished singers, who do the lion's share of the vocal heavy lifting. Lee mostly

chant-sings over top of sweeping orchestral flourishes—with the exception of "The Bloody Verdict of Verdun" where he bellows about the beheading of 4000 Saxon men for not renouncing Paganism—but he definitely holds his own. Touted as "symphonic metal," *Charlemagne* is really closer to grandiose classical with occasional passages punctuated by clugging metal guitar. The thundering trumpets, lush strings and shimmering brass one would expect from such regalia are indeed the order of the day. On the whole, this is the auditory equivalent of unbridled victory—gloriously overwrought but somehow completely fitting of the film legend's British knightlyhood and the respect his cinematic legacy commands. TT 3.5

done, I have done a lot more comedy than people are aware of. And I've done westerns, and films using American accents.

You were approached by Spanish actor Paul Naschy about appearing in a film as Don Quixote, correct?

It was never specified. He did say that it would be very interesting if I could play Don Quixote, but unfortunately he recently passed away.

What's the appeal of playing Quixote?

He's a heroic character, he thinks the best of everything and everybody. But, of course, he has great delusions. As you know, he charges windmills, thinking they are giants. Everything he does is noble and—if you've read the book or seen the previous films—is to basically help the people.

Let's talk about a project that did

get off the ground, and was recently released: the symphonic metal album *Charlemagne: By the Sword and the Cross*. You come from a very musical family, your great-grandparents had an opera company, then there are your various singing roles in films such as *The Wicker Man*. How does the *Charlemagne* project fit into your love of music?

Well, it's a different type of music from anything that I've done. I have appeared with two bands before, *Rhapsody* and *Manowar* in the *Rhapsody* song I sang, and [for] *Manowar*, I believe, I was the narrator. But I was kind of hooked onto it, you might say, this kind of music—not the extreme kind—but "metal," for lack of a better word. That's the element, the strongest element in *Charlemagne*. It is the story of Charlemagne and his father, his brother, the Pope and many, many other characters, done with metal bands, an orchestra, chorus and many very good singers.

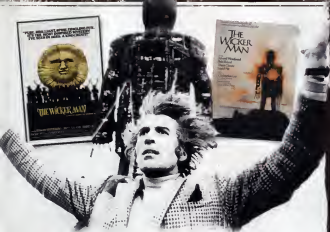
Is there an element about metal that appeals to you in particular?

Yes, power. Gunpowder, if you like—an element which an actor must have, and in this particular instance the singers. This type of music is very powerful. It's certainly another step in my career. Another string in my bow, you might say.

The project is also a good fit because you're a direct descendant of Charlemagne.

I'd been informed by the Heraldic College in Rome, which doesn't actually exist anymore, that my family on my mother's side, the Carandinis, has the right to bear the arms of the Holy Roman Empire. I'm assuming that's correct. I know I can trace my family back several centuries.





**I've certainly had an interest,
and I still do, in the unknown,
the mysterious, the occult...**

Christopher Lee

In terms of other new projects, what can you say about your involvement with the new Robin Hardy film, *The Wicker Tree*?

People will think that it's another *Wicker Man*. But it is not at all. This is only similar in that it has an element of paganism in it. It's about two young Americans who... come to Scotland on a mission, almost a religious one. It's a very uneasy film. My part is very small, but they asked me to do it. They wanted some sort of connection to *The Wicker Man*. I think it will be very good indeed.

Are you reprising the role of Lord Summerisle?

No, not at all.

By chance, what did you think of the Hollywood remake with Nicolas Cage?

I never saw it.

Would you say that your interest in something like *The Wicker Man* stems from your well-known curiosity about the occult? Does that type of thing still fascinate you?

Yes, I've certainly had an interest, and I still do, in the unknown, the mysterious, the occult, almost the supernatural in some respects and, again, the unexpected. The ending in *The Wicker Man* was certainly unexpected and a great shock, which I think is the answer. You don't know what's going to happen. Everybody's so nice to this policeman, played by Edward Woodward, who sadly died not too long ago. But there are so elements of evil in this film at all. It's simply that they're pagan.

How was your interest in the occult born? Can you attribute it to any event in your life?

It's probably because when I was young, I was a classical scholar in Latin and Greek, and of course that meant knowledge of mythology. And I became particularly interested in Nordic mythology in *The Wicker Man*, there's a lot of Celtic myth, Pagan belief, and sacrifice. I've been interested in mythology all my life. I still read books about it from countries all over the world.

Are there any books of particular interest that you've read recently that fit into the occult or mythology genres?

I can't think of any offhand, except *The Lord of the Rings*, which is from the absolutely brilliant author J.R.R. Tolkien. He did something that no other author has ever done, to the best of my knowledge, invent a language. I read that book every year.

Cont'd on page 28...

ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING HAMMER
EXPERTS INVITES YOU TO ENROLL IN...

Hammer 101

FOR HAMMER FANS NOT CONTENT

with merely watching the filmic exploits of Baron Frankenstein and Count Dracula, a forthcoming university course will allow them to learn about the legendary British studio and what made its films successful with audiences worldwide. Titled *Hammer: The Birth of British Horror*, it previously ran as an in-class open-learning program on the grounds of Queen's University Belfast (QUB) in 2008. Now, the man behind it, writer and film historian Robert Simpson, has retitled it as a ten-week online course (through QUB) with a larger scope, in order to accommodate students outside of Ireland.

"I've been developing it as a distance-learning module," he explains. "We got some great feedback, and [also] a lot of frustrated interest from overseas. So now, anyone from anywhere in the world can enroll."

Incorporating a history of the company along with a discussion and critique of select films, the course, which starts this October, will also devote time to examine various publicity and marketing strategies used to promote and sell the films, and will make a point of covering the studio's non-horror output, as well. Unfortunately for students outside of the region, Simpson also includes a special field trip.

"Unless you're willing to travel to Belfast you'll miss out on the climax," he says. "Which is the period-inspired cinema-going experience. We hire out a small private cinema and screen a package in something as close to the '50s/'60s experience as we can get: two features, a short, trailers and newsreel."

In addition to developing the course, Simpson has been writing pieces for Hammer's official website, penning a history of Hammer Films (scheduled for release next year), maintaining his own Hammer-themed site (unofficialhammerfilms.com), planning a Hammer movie poster-themed art show and working on a doctoral project about Hammer's sister company, Exclusive Films (known currently as Exclusive Media Group).

He confirms, "I'm totally engrossed in Hammer at the moment, to the point where it has taken over my life."

For updates and further details on *Hammer: The Birth of British Horror*, visit avalard.co.uk.

JAMES CURRIE

SONY ROUNDS UP A HALF DOZEN TALES OF MURDER AND MAYHEM IN
The Icons of Suspense Collection: Hammer Films.
MANY FOR THE FIRST TIME ON HOME VIDEO.

Hammer's Horror Monsters

BY PAUL CORUPE



Hammer Film Productions will always be best known for its long-running series of colour monster movies that debuted in the 1950s, but these gothic treats weren't the studio's only genre output at the time. Between lush adaptations of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, Hammer also regularly cranked out low-budget black and white thrillers

CASH ON DEMAND (1951)

Starring Peter Cushing, André Morell and Richard Vernon
Directed by Quentin Lawrence
Written by David T. Chavler, Jacques Gilleis and Lennart Gredler

Stars Peter Cushing and André Morell, who first peered in Hammer's *Sherlock Holmes* adaptation *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, reunite for this economically told, little-seen gem. Cushing is nothing short of brilliant as Fordyce, a stuffy, unloving bank manager who wouldn't think twice about firing his most loyal employee just a few days before Christmas. But when Fordyce tries to impress a visiting insurance investigator, Mr. Hepburn (Morell), he discovers the distinguished gentleman is not what he seems — a phone call confirms that Hepburn is a well-prepared heist artist ready to kill the banker's family if he doesn't get his hands on the fat payroll hidden away in the cavernous safe. Taking place on only a handful of sets, this exciting entry is mainly an actor's piece, and doesn't sag on nail-biting sequences as Fordyce must reluctantly help stuff Hepburn's bags, signal to outside accomplices and go to extravagant lengths to cover up the pair's criminal activities from the other employee, or risk harm to his wife and child. But it's Cushing's performance that really makes *Cash on Demand* the most interesting and successful thriller in the set, as he takes his character from a stuck-up Scrooge to a sympathetic coward for the poignant finale.

that offered punchy twists on familiar plots. A few of these programmers popped up previously, including *Scream of Fear* and *The Navy*, but now Sony has devoted a six-DVD set to Hammer's stark but entertaining thrillers. *Icons of Suspense Collection: Hammer Films* reveals some of the British House of Horror's best kept secrets.

MANIAC (1963)

Starring Kenneth Matthews, Nicola Gray and Liliane Brousse
Directed by Michael Carrasco
Written by Jimmy Sangster

A deadly love triangle takes shape in this globe-hopping chiller when spurned American artist Geoff (Kenwyn Matthews) rents a room at a small café in rural France. There he gets romantically involved with the attractive bartender (Liliane Brousse) and her stepmother, Eve (Nicola Gray), who owns the place. Like several of the films in this set, *Maniac* plays out largely as an innocuous melodrama before it takes an unexpected left turn into creepiness about halfway through. This time, Eve uses her natural charms to convince Geoff to help spring her deranged husband (Donald Houston), who was put in a mental institution for taking an acetylene torch to the rapist who attacked his daughter. Geoff begins to realize that orchestrating a jailbreak for Eve's jealous hubby may not have been such a good idea after all, especially when a wedding torch in a nearby work shed keeps mysteriously lighting itself. Beginning with a highly effective scene of the rapist's death and ending in a series of double crosses that turn logic on its ear, this is a fun and atmospheric collaboration between Hammer movieboys Michael Carrasco and Jimmy Sangster.



*Dwindling Candies (left to right): Janina Faye and Nick McGinnis in *Never Take Candy From a Stranger*, and Karlene Matthews in *Maoism*.*

NEVER TAKE CANDY FROM A STRANGER (1980)

Starring Patrick Allen, Janina Faye and Felix Aylmer
Directed by Cyril Frankel
Written by Roger Gars and John Hunter

The most controversial and harrowing film in this DVD set, *Never Take Candy From a Stranger* from a *Stranger* was remarkably ahead of its time in its depiction of an all-too-real nightmare: child molestation. The welcome wagon has barely left when the town's new high school principal Mr. Carter (Patrick Allen) discovers his ten-year-old daughter (Janina Faye) was coerced into taking off her clothes by Mr. Ockberry (Felix Aylmer), the creepy elderly patriarch of the area's most prominent family. Largely employed by Ockberry's son (Bill Nasty), the townsfolk use intimidation to keep the old man's perversions secret. After a prejudiced court trial ends with the pedophile's acquittal, Carter is coerced into dropping the charges since there was, technically, no sexual contact. It's a mistake that everyone lives to regret in this uncompromising morality play that overcomes conventional courtroom sequences to install real drama with aggressive, shadowy cinematography. *Aylmer*, too, is terrific as the dirty old coot who strikes a doubly sinister note, despite not having any lines.

THE SNOOKEL (1950)

Starring Peter van Eyck, Bette St. John and Mandy Miller
Directed by Guy Green
Written by Antonio Margherita, Peter Myers and Jeremy Sampson

One of Hammer's more unusual outings, *The Snookel* is a tale of murder and revenge that owes an obvious debt to the macabre twists popularized by Bill Gaines' EC Comics. Swiss actor Peter van Eyck stars as Paul Decker, a calculating killer who offs his rich wife by filling their home with gas and hiding in a specially constructed chamber with the titular breathing apparatus. Paul convinces the police that her death was an accident, but his stepdaughter Joan (Bette St. John) isn't so sure, especially since she dares to have seen him down her father years earlier. But Paul isn't going to take such accusations in stride, and begins to bad-mouth Joan to her nanny (Mandy Miller) and arrange for the teen to have her own little "accident." The film's simple premise is maybe a little too thin to cover the long running time, but the pure menace that van Eyck seems to emit from every pore makes this installment one of the set's most memorable.

STOP ME BEFORE I KILL! (1960)

Starring Ronald Lewis, Diane Cleito and Claude Dauphin
Directed by Val Guest
Written by Val Guest and Ronald Scott-Thorn

A striking thriller in the classic Hitchcock mold, Val Guest's contribution to the set concerns Alan, an accident-shaken race car driver (Ronald Lewis) driven by a psychosexual compulsion to murder his wife (Diane Cleito). On a late honeymoon in Southern France the couple hopes will help Alan recover from his accident, the distressed driver meets a psychiatrist (Claude Dauphin) who takes an interest in his case.

After helping him unleash the suppressed memory he believes is causing Alan's blood-thirsty tendencies, but the cure may not have taken — Alan wakes up the next morning to find blood smeared all over the bathroom and no sign of his ever-present spouse, leading him to believe that the charming doctor was right about him after all. While not as loud as its little night-squint, *Stop Me Before I Kill!* is a pleasantly twisty effort capably handled by Hammer veteran Guest, the director of the excellent *The Quatermass Experiment*.

THESE ARE THE DAMNED (1963)

Starring Macdonald Carey
Shirley Anne Field and Oliver Reed
Directed by Joseph Losey
Written by Evan Jones and H.L. Lawrence

This sickly paced Cold War relic from McCarthy-era blacklisted American director Joseph Losey gears up with a juvenile delinquency plotline that gradually melts away into the realm of falsethic science fiction. Things get underway with sick leather-clad gang leader King (Oliver Reed), who makes his living robbing hapless tourists such as Simon Weiss (Macdonald Carey) with the help of his sexy sister Joan (Shirley Anne Field). But when Joan suddenly develops a nagging conscience, she confesses to Simon and tries to flee with him to escape King's ruthless grip. Borrowing a few ideas from the then-recent hit *Wages of the Damned*, the plot sees the trio stumbling on a military bunker inhabited by children who appear to have no knowledge of the outside world. Joan and Simon try to help them escape, but a group of elite scientists don't take too kindly to any meddling — they're running a top secret genetic engineering project to raise irradiated children equipped to survive in a post-apocalyptic world. Despite the potential for exploitation thrills, *These Are the Damned* remains awfully somber and understated, except for the morosely catchy (and campy) pop song theme, "Black Leather Rock," by Hammer composer James Bernard.



Commanding Presence: Lee as Burpo in *Sleepy Hollow*, and (below, left to right) genre perfectionists Peter Cushing, Vincent Price, Lee and John Carradine



In addition to *The Wicker Tree*, you're also going to be working on a film about grave robbing, correct?

Well, yes. My next job is with John Landis in *Burke and Hare*, which is actually a comedy.

And that's not all...

I've got several things to come out. One is an animated film called *Monsters Men*, which is extremely funny. I don't play any of the characters that you think I would. There's another one called *Boogie Woogie*, with Joanna Lumley. She's a lovely woman. And recently I made a film which has been out to neighbors called *Traps*. It is with Colin Farrell, who gave a terrific performance. I had the best part that I've had in years, and I think I gave the best performance in a very, very long time. But the film had twenty minutes cut out, which was a disgraceful thing to do. And it certainly had nothing to do with the director.

What do you think is your greatest role?

I went to Pakistan in 1957 for ten weeks to play the founder of the nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. And that's the title of the film, *Jinnah*. That's the biggest challenge I've ever had — [playing the role] in front of his own people, who greeted me with enormous kindness and praise. I think that's probably the best thing I've ever done.

Is there an actor or actress out there that you really admire? You've mentioned Sir Anthony Hopkins in the past, but is there anyone else?

Well, I would see anything with Gene Hackman in it; and of course you have Jack Nicholson, whom I know, Dustin Hoffman, whom I know. Robert De Niro and Al Pacino, both of whom I don't know. And there are of course others, like Jeff Bridges, who is a very fine actor. And, of course, there's Johnny Depp.

Like Depp, you've appeared in several of Tim Burton's films.

including *Alice in Wonderland*, in which you voice the Jabberwocky. Are there any other directors that you'd love to work with?

There are three directors that I'd love to work with: Martin Scorsese, Clint Eastwood and Peter Weir. But the director is undoubtedly Tim. He's number one in my book.



Alice in Wonderland seems like a very ambitious project. Have you seen it yet? Thoughts?

Tim had an incredibly tough time getting this picture made, going backwards and forwards between the States and here. And there's so much CGI, I think that there are only about six live actors in the film. I'm going to see it later this week.

I think his films — and, of course, the newer *Star Wars* movies and *The Lord of the Rings* series — have really introduced you to younger generations of filmgoers.

Yes. You see, there are many generations that know me. But many of them are very young; children of the age of six can go and see *Star Wars* and many of them do, and of course children over the age of twelve can go and see *Lord of the Rings*, and now it seems that I'm known to every generation. You can't ask for more than that.

At this point in your life, what do you fear the most?

Well, everybody fears something, don't they? I think above all, I'm a bit afraid of the unknown. And speaking on an entirely personal basis, I don't want to die before any other members of my family. You understand what I mean by that?

I have a fear, obviously. I don't know how to define it, really. We're all going to die, but I'm not ready yet.

I remember two wonderful comments: Vincent Price said that if he had a gravestone, it would say, "I'll be back," and Jack Lemmon, who does have a gravestone, had it inscribed with, "Jack Lemmon — in." And if I did have a gravestone or a monument of any kind, I think it would probably say, "Too Soon."



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CONSULT EXPERTS AND
LUMINARIES FOR AN
IN-DEPTH LOOK AT
HOW THE GENRE HAS
CHANGED SINCE WE
BEGAN PUBLISHING IN
1997, AND WHERE
IT'S HEADED...

XIII Years of Fear

SINCE RUE MORQUE BEGAN THIRTEEN YEARS AND 100 ISSUES AGO, THE GENRE HAS UNDERGONE A PERIOD OF CHANGE LIKE NO OTHER IN ITS HISTORY. As the internet started to boom, so did fan culture, allowing horror lovers from around the world to form communities, discover new (and rediscover old) content easier and faster. Affordable, user-friendly technology such as consumer-level digital video, desktop-publishing software and Photoshop, plus new platforms including blogs, YouTube and Facebook have redrawn and destroyed boundaries between those who make dark art, sell it, write about it and consume it.

During this period, world-shaking events have whetted our appetite for violence, while environmental and apocalyptic anxieties have made us both wallow in visions of our own self-destruction and become nostalgic for simpler times. Whole new sets of fears and fresh monsters have fuelled a genre boom that seems to self-perpetuate – we create technology that further removes us from our primal, savage nature, and then use that technology to find new ways to indulge and celebrate our deepest fears. If the past thirteen years have taught us anything, it's that we need to terrify ourselves more than ever.

To better understand this evolution, our writers contacted genre experts and icons to help them explore specific developments of the past thirteen years that are near to their hearts. In addition, we've asked our interview subjects to help us speculate on the future of the horror genre. Now read on for thirteen years of fear, and beyond...

PERHAPS THE BIGGEST CHANGE TO THE GENRE SINCE RUE MORQUE STARTED WAS THE TURN TO TORTURE, GRAPHIC VIOLENCE AND GORE.

Bring on the Blood

—KARIN LEE, 1997

In 1997, the biggest horror movie at the box office was *Scream 2*. Ten years later, a woman could be seen chopping off her victim's penis and feeding it to a dog in *Hostel: Part II*. While Eli Roth's film wasn't the financial success that Wes Craven's 2002 *10* horror-lite effort was, it still enjoyed a wide release – an example of just how brutally violent the genre had become. The question is, why?

Let's recall that the '80s were perhaps the weakest decade ever for horror. Not only were fewer horror films making it to theatres, but the gore and gritty violence that was once so integral to the genre had faded out. Yet just a few years after the decade ended, horror cinema would chart a new course entirely.

By all accounts, 2003 was the first big year for brutality at the box office, with *House of 1000 Corpses*, *Wong Foon* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* remake ushering in a new wave of splatter, to be followed by the *Saw* and *Hostel* franchises, and a gory new version of *The Hills Have Eyes*, among others.

TIMELINE OF FETTER

MARCH 1997

After testing in Japan, DVD comes to North America.

MARCH 10, 1997

TV's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* premieres.

MAY 24, 1997

Black Sabbath reunites with Ozzy Osbourne to headline the main stage at Ozzfest.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1998

Wes Craven calls it quits.

DECEMBER 4, 1999

Quentin Tarantino's short-for-shot recreation of *Psycho*. No one predicts the slew of remakes to come.

One could argue that the seeds for brutality were planted at the beginning of the decade, though, courtesy the foreign market. Japan's Takashi Miike got everyone's attention with his splatterfest *Ichi the Killer* in 2001, and the next year French director Gaspar Noé unleashed the unbearably cruel *Irreversible*, with the very aim to punish viewers via an eight-minute subway rape scene. But this still doesn't explain mainstream audiences' newfound appetite for destruction, and why censors were suddenly so tolerant of it. Did studios simply figure out that we'd grown tired of lame efforts such as *Deep Blue Sea* and *The Faculty*? Perhaps this zest for brutality was simply a reaction?

Darren Bousman, director of *Saw II* through *IV*, agrees. "The reason the hardcore became mainstream was because we were bored of what was mainstream. It's just a never-ending circle. The '70s had a renaissance of hardcore, brutal horror; it changed in the '80s, and then changed again in the '90s."

Records have also looked towards the socio-political climate to explain this shift to the extreme. Seventies exploitation films such as the original *Texas Chainsaw* and *Last House on the Left* are often seen as violent reactions to events such as the Vietnam War and the Kent State massacre. In the '80s, people looked at the genre and saw the reflection of AIDS and nuclear weapons. So it would seem that after 9/11 and the beginnings of the "War on Terror," audiences flocked to theatres to witness physical violence in ways they'd never seen before, while the previously strict MPAA had a newfound tolerance.

Julien Maury, co-director of *Inside* and one of the leaders of the New Wave of French Horror, offers this assessment: "It's understood that the political context influences artists and that audiences are willing to see fictional horror as a way to exorcise their fears. Horror cinema allows us to control these fears and face them without taking any risk. Everything is under your control! Since *Rue Morgue* started, the media and politicians have constantly presented the world as a dangerous place. With the war in Iraq, September 11, torture of prisoners in Afghanistan, movies and even mainstream TV shows evolved and showed more and more in-your-face violence. The artist needed to show it and audience needed to see it."

Indeed, there are parallels to be drawn between world events and the genre's new crop of violent films, particularly the *Saw* and *Hostel* franchises. Unlike the popular slashers of the '80s, *Saw*'s principle villain Jigsaw never directly kills anyone. Instead, he is the criminal ensnared behind an evil organization. He seemingly knows everything about you, can be anywhere, and even in death, there is someone ready to take his place. Who's a

part of Jigsaw's network? It could be your friend; it could be your co-worker. Does this paranoia sound familiar?

In the case of *Hostel*, the similarities with the real world were much more obvious. While the first film was bringing in \$47 million USD at the box office, news stories were breaking about American soldiers torturing prisoners who had gone on a hunger strike at Guantanamo Bay by strapping them into restraint chairs and force-feeding them. Restraint chairs became the key torture device (used by a fictional company called Elite Hunting that caters to the sadistic whims of the rich and depraved) in the *Hostel* films. While Roth's original intent was seemingly to feed a desire to see cocky American frat boys punished for their arrogance, the movie ultimately fed off a disturbing new image in the public consciousness.

In a chapter on torture in recent cinema from his upcoming book, author Kim Newman says it is impossible to ignore the parallels between these new violent fantasies and the cold realities of the news headlines.

He writes, "In the world after 9/11, everyone felt they were at the mercy of financial institutions, media cartels, terrorist groups and government agencies – not to mention private corporations given to acting like terrorist groups or government agencies. In this climate, titles like *Elite Hunting* seem credible."

Film critic David Edelstein would appropriately dub films such as *Hostel* and *Saw* "torture porn" in a now-famous 2006 *New York Magazine* article. In it, he suggested that audiences' new obsession with torture came from a political atmosphere in which we'd all approve of torture if it's being done for the "right" reasons. A bold claim perhaps, but one that might explain film censors' acceptance of this violent imagery.

So where do we go from here? Well, we've opened the door to the abductor pretty wide, and a return to another curley, bloodless decade seems out of the question. Filmmakers will have a difficult time trying to shock audiences, but maybe that's a good thing. Perhaps we'll all get sick of the bloodletting for a bit and demand more thought-provoking films. Then again, maybe it all depends on what happens outside the theatre. Either way, we'll be watching. ☹



THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE GENRE HAS CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE PAST THIRTEEN YEARS – BUT FOR EVERY *BUFFY*, THERE'S ALSO A *TWILIGHT*...

Hear Me Roar!

by CLARE HOPKIN

From *Mary Shelley to The Machine Girl*, women have always played a significant role in developing the horror genre. And thirteen years ago, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* – the amped-up TV version of the semi-obscure 1992 feature film – seemed to put a final stake through the heart of the stereotype of the helpless female victim onscreen. But whether things have changed for women working in the genre – and how female characters are portrayed within it – is still a matter for some debate.

"*Buffy* definitely influenced the way that women are now portrayed in horror movies," says Nikki Stafford, author of *Bite Me: The Unofficial Guide to Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. "Joss [Whedon] posited this idea that girls – who eventually became women – are powerful, intelligent beings who hold in their hands the power to save the world. The men on the show were all secondary to the women." Stafford also observes that *Buffy* had a huge cultural impact, bringing women to the genre in greater numbers than ever before; she

describes it as "the gateway show for women to get hooked on genre TV."

Veteran screen queen Debbie Rochon agrees that the show also marked a fundamental shift in the kinds of roles available to women.

"It changed the playing field completely," she says. "It was a show that featured kick-ass females that didn't have to hide behind their husbands or boyfriends. ... It also taught a lot of the up-and-coming women who were interested in horror that it was cool to play the tough chick."

The popularity and originality of the series is undeniable – *Buffy* studies is a growing academic field that boasts a bi-annual conference and an online journal – but now, Stephanie Meyer's vampire-teen series *Twilight*

JANUARY 25, 1999
\$60,000 *The Blair Witch Project* premieres at Sundance; goes on to earn \$250 million worldwide

APRIL 26, 1999
Columbine High School massacre. Blame placed on violent media, dark music and goth culture.

JUNE 25, 1999
Slipknot releases its self-titled debut album.



OCTOBER 5, 1999
A new *Masters* lineup fronted by Michelle Graves releases *Famous Monsters*.

NOVEMBER 24, 1999
End of Days is released, joining similar 'horred' movies *The Ninth Gate*, *Stigmata* and *Bless the Child*.



Agatha a force to be reckoned with. It features an extremely passive main character whose existence revolves around her creepy-in-all-the-wrong-ways vampire boyfriend, and has been heavily criticized as a step back for women both in and out of the genre.

In addition, Hollywood's current predilection for big-budget horror remakes is hardly fertile ground for the development of captivating and original female characters. Paul Solet, director of the maternal-themed undead baby movie *Grace* (2006), sees this trend as a failure of creativity, pure and simple.

"In the genre, filmmakers, or perhaps producers, seem to be under the impression that their job is to provide titillation, to create an exclusively visceral experience," he says. "So attention to character and story falls by the wayside, and the focus falls, instead, on working from the flesh in. The results are the usual quick fixes: more blood, and exploitation of the female form."

But with the increase in readily available filmmaking technology over the past decade, more women have had the chance to get behind the camera. Heidi Marinuzzi, founder and editor of pretty-scary.net, feels that female filmmakers bring a different perspective to the genre.

"Women's horror usually deals with psychological and complicated family issues, and often draws on aspects of the surreal and avant-garde to express them," she says. However, she also points out that the difference in the way male and female directors are represented at most horror conventions is typical of how they're generally treated by the media and by fans.

"You'll see George Romero, Oliver Barker, Adam Green, Wes Craven, etc. invited as guests and celebrities. The fans want their autograph. But you'll never see a female horror director invited as a guest."

When Katherine Bigelow — director of *Nickelodeon* (1987) — made history earlier this year as the first woman to win the Oscar for Best Director, for many, there was a sense that it was too little progress, too late. But women continue to stake their claim to horror by writing, directing, performing and blogging; consequently, as Solet observes, "It's from these ranks that the next generation of filmmakers will come. My hope is that many of these budding brights will blossom into an exponentially more passionate new breed of genre filmmakers." ☛

THE PAST THIRTEEN YEARS HAVE SEEN THE MARKET FOR HORROR ON HOME VIDEO EXPLODE WITH PUMPED-OUT NICHE RELEASES, BUT THESE DAYS MAY BE COMING TO AN END.

Death of the Special Edition?

—BY TRACY MCELROY



Almost coincident with the launch of *Rus Morgue* was the introduction of the DVD format in North America. At the time, VHS was the dominant home video platform. By no means was it the best, Super VHS and LaserDisc offered superior audio and video quality, but the players and media were so prohibitively expensive that neither was widely adopted by consumers. DVD, essentially an extension of and an improvement on the LaserDisc, marked the beginning of a sea change in the presentation of genre films. They were now uncult, in their original theatrical aspect ratio, and augmented by bonus material.

"The LaserDisc format really woke people up to the possibilities of better home video presentations," says Don May, Jr., the mastermind behind acclaimed restorations of genre classics *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) during his time with LaserDisc label Elite Entertainment. "Better resolution, better sound and the ability to do supplemental features like commentaries, LaserDisc was the reason I got into this industry. I was a collector and I was fascinated by the technology that presented my favorite films in such a great way."

May left Elite to concentrate on DVD with Synapse Films in 1998, releasing superb editions of everything from fan favorites such as *Street Trash* (1987) and *Brain Damage* (1988) to notorious Japanese splatter epics, including *Entrails of a Virgin* (1967) and *Evil Dead Vap* (1988), at consumer-friendly prices.

"In the early days, VHS tapes were almost \$100 retail, as well as some of the fancier LaserDisc titles," he says. "I have always been a fan of horror films and used to import LDs from Japan that cost hundreds of dollars because the quality was so much better. DVD was better quality and much cheaper. It was easier for us rabid horror and sci-fi fans to grab up our favorites in better versions. We no longer had to pay \$200 for that LaserDisc of the Japanese *Gates of Hell*. We could now get it for \$20! At that price point, with the wealth of extras and space DVDs could provide, DVD exploded."

Stephen Beis, who since 2001 has run Unsensored Films (Guinea Pig series, *Frankenhooker* and *Atomheart*), recalls, "Horror fans always wanted to see the uncult horror films. Back then, most people didn't even know that a lot of horror films were out when they rented them from their local video store. I saw the opportunity

to get into the business and give the horror fans exactly what they wanted: uncult genre films."

Part of the enormous appeal of the DVD format has been the value-added component of supplemental material in the form of commentary tracks, production featurettes and interviews, so much so that the quality or lack thereof of the extra material on a disc becomes more important than the presentation of the feature itself. However, the market has become so saturated with product that smaller horror labels can't get retail shelf space. Now, the high-definition format war that has given us Blu-ray and left consumers weary and wary. Coupled this with the current economic climate and the predicted death of physical media and it seems bells are tolling. Michael Felsher, the man behind Red Shirt Pictures, which has produced bonus materials for such DVD releases as *The Burning* (1981), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986) and *The Monster Squad* (1987), isn't optimistic that fans can expect to see such special editions in the future.

"There certainly has been a change in some studios' attitude towards the amount of special features on certain titles," he explains. "In fact, I'd go so far as to say that certain titles I worked on only a couple of years ago would not even be considered for release now. ... My prediction is that the market for physical media will become more and more niche and will ultimately service the collectors more than anyone else."

The future of home video is uncertain at best and grim at worst, agrees May.

"I know what I'm about to say may seem crazy, but I feel that, within the next year or so, the studios may drop DVD all together. Blu-ray is struggling to find its hold and the studios want it to succeed for a number of reasons. It's harder to copy and upload to the 'net. With the new 3-D systems coming in, I don't think the studios want to deal with three different physical formats for their films — DVD, Blu-ray, 3-D Blu-ray. ... All that will need to happen is for one or two studios to call DVD quits and the entire home video industry will shift."

Although horror fans are known to be rabid collectors, Beis laments that the era of small labels digging up gems and releasing them as collectible special editions is ending.

"I release a film that no one has ever seen and the next day it's available on 50 different sites. I like to have a library, and people love to collect, but the generation that is coming up behind us doesn't have that mentality. They expect everything to be free." ☛



FEBRUARY 12, 2000

Original musician shock rocker Screamin' Jay Hawkins dies at age 70.

AUGUST 20, 2000

Slimy Puppy reunites for a concert at the Dresden Festival in Dresden, Germany.

DECEMBER 10, 2000

Bette Midler tickles the best great Western cinematic taboo — the entertaining swears of children.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Waldie Trade Center towers fall to terrorism; horror flicks thereafter display brutality not seen since the '70s.

APRIL 11, 2003

Rob Zombie releases his first feature effort, *House of 1000 Corpses*.

OCTOBER 2003

Image Comics introduces *The Walking Dead* more zombie comic mayhem to come.

THE INTERNET WAS ALL "WELL-PUNNY" IN THE '90S, BUT NOW IT'S ALL "MATH IN DARK MUSIC." IT SURVIVED, THRIVE AND DIVIDE UP INTO INCREASINGLY SPECIFIC SUBGENRES.

Fractured Frequencies

by TREVOR TUNNICLIFFE

It's impossible to retrospect on the last thirteen years in horror music without crediting the internet for blowing things wide open. In the late '90s, your favourite radio station, magazine and music TV channel were still the primary source of new tunes. Today, kids "tweet" on social networking site Twitter about the latest Norwegian black metal album they've just downloaded, before finding a new flavour-of-the-week between status updates and brooding self-portraits. Tack on the overwhelming impact of sprawling global arteries that are genre blogs, internet radio stations, independent review sites, online periodicals and digital rabbit holes such as MySpace and Facebook, and the plight of your average horror band has changed immeasurably in thirteen years.

"The internet truly is a double-edged sword," says GWAR singer and 25-year music industry vet, Odus Urungus. "Yes, it makes it easier to get your music out there, but the downside of it is that because it's so easy, there's a huge prolusion of shitty bands who basically only exist because they have a MySpace page. Oh, how I yearn for the days of demo tapes and fax machines."

Consequently, a greater number of horror bands can now theoretically sustain themselves. But they have to stand out from the pack. And so, the subgenres of the darker end of the musical spectrum have splintered. Heavy metal, thrash, doom, death metal, psychobilly and notably now become sub-subgenres: metallicore, deathcore, grindcore, goregrind, deathgrind, gothabilly, thrashabilly, punkabilly, surfabilly, black metal, drone metal, folk metal, gothic metal — you get the picture.

While major labels continue their struggle to adapt to the public's ever-changing musical digestion, indie labels with less pull (but also less overhead) are not only making headway, they're feeling the effects of a level playing field.

"Without a doubt, particularly in visual genres like horror punk, horror metal and shock rock, I would estimate 90 to 95 percent of our customers and band fans are directly because of the internet," says Shane Diablo, co-owner of horror punk imprint Dr. Cyclops Records (DieMonsterDie, The Crimson Ghosts). "Big money labels are losing sales, but the small guy who truly believes in what he does now has a chance in this industry. Really, you are one single or one very cool video away from opening the floodgates to new fans, new bands, and a long future."

For Edward Douglas of gothic instrumental group Midnight Syndicate, the shift away from the tightly wound promotional machine means the ability to survive as a working purveyor of horror music — a notion that, prior to the changes in the industry over the past thirteen years, would've been an uphill battle.

"The internet has allowed us to reach fans around the world without ever touring or having a radio hit," he says. "It has also lessened the deadstock grip that the record labels, commercial radio stations and distributors had on this industry when we first entered. You're only going to be able to reach so many people through the traditional avenues and the cost is great. The internet opened the door to a much wider audience for independent artists at not much additional cost."

Lonesome Wyatt of Those Poor Bastards, a band whose self-described "doom country" stylings have definitely benefited from the proliferation of subgenres, is even more succinct.

"Probably about 70 percent of [our] fans are from the internet. A band like this could exist, but it would just be harder to spread the disease."



HORROR BY THE NUMBERS:

A LOOK AT THE TOP EARNING MOVIES OF THE LAST THIRTEEN YEARS



LEGEND: BUDGET (YELLOW BAR) WORLDWIDE EARNINGS (RED BAR). RANK LISTED AFTER THE FILM'S RELEASE. DETERMINED BY DOMESTIC EARNINGS. *IN SOME CASES BUDGET AMOUNTS ARE LISTED IN SOURCES AS "ESTIMATED"

(SOURCES: BOXOFFICEMOJO.COM, WIKIPEDIA.COM)
 *NOTE: RANK LISTED AFTER THE FILM'S RELEASE. DETERMINED BY DOMESTIC EARNINGS
 *IN SOME CASES BUDGET AMOUNTS ARE LISTED IN SOURCES AS "ESTIMATED"

OCTOBER 17, 2003

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre heralds the arrival of remakes from Michael Bay's *Platoon* director.

NOVEMBER 21, 2003

Daybreak Ignites a mini Korean K-horror wave, that includes *The Host* (2006) and *Thirst* (2009).

FEBRUARY 25, 2004

The Passion of the Christ is released to become the top-grossing "torture porn" flick of all time.

APRIL 2, 2004

Guillermo Del Toro's adaptation of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* comic hits theatres.

AUGUST 2004

Rue Morgue Radio, the world's first horror-themed podcast, begins.

AUGUST 27, 2004

Rue Morgue's annual Festival of Fear convention launches with George A. Romero as guest of honor.

TOM MEE, AUTHOR OF BOOKS ON TAKASHI MIKE AND SHINYA TSUKAMOTO, DRAWS UPON THE ARCHIVE OF HIS JAPANESE CINEMA-THEMED MIDNIGHT EYE WEBSITE TO INVESTIGATE THE J-HORROR PHENOMENON.

Creeping in From the East

—TOM MEE

J-horror. It doesn't even take a *Rue Morgue* reader to list off all of its visual characteristics. So mercilessly was the genre milked in the space of a few years that spooky little girls with stringy black hair eventually began popping up everywhere.

It really all started back in 1993, when video company employee Norio Tsuruta came up with a way to cheaply and effectively produce horror movies for the video market.

"I actually got the idea for a horror piece when I talked to a video store employee, and he told me about a kind of documentary on ghosts called *A Jour to Famous Haunted Places* that was renting really well," Tsuruta said in an interview with Nicholas Rucka. His *Scary True Stories*, which created the template of the J-horror formula, became such a hit that copycats began to pop up within weeks of its release, some directed by such virtual unknowns as Hideo Nakata and Kiyoshi Kurosawa. J-horror was virtually born self-cannibalistic.

What dragged the genre out of the VHS ghetto and into the multiplexes, though, was 1996's *Ring*, adapted from a Koji Suzuki novel, directed by Nakata and produced by Takashi Ishio. *Ring* relaunches the age-old tradition of the horror film as date movie when it became a massive hit amongst teens, a demographic that was poorly catered to by Japanese films until then.

Norio Tsuruta, who would go on to direct the second sequel, *Ring 2: Beyond*, had mixed feelings at first: "In 1998 *Ring* was a big hit, and when I saw it, honestly speaking, I thought, 'This looks exactly like what I have been doing.' It was a real shock. It was really exactly like what I had done in [*Scary True Stories*], right down to [ghost character] Sadako's way of moving."

Although the size of the screen had changed, the attitude of producers hadn't. Sequels, cash-ins, TV spinoffs, and other Suzuki adaptations began to appear thick and fast, and by the dawn of the new millennium (around the time the West had caught wind of what was going on through festivals and bootlegs), such high-end entries as Masako Hara's *Kikare* (Jingami and Kurosawa's *Pulse* had already suffered the fate of indifference, playing to largely empty cinemas at home).

What happened next was a fortuitous but not entirely unrelated series of events: Takashi Mike's *Audition*, made in 1999 at the height of J-horror fever in Japan, is released in North America and Europe in 2001 and sends audiences running for the exits in fright. A few reputed American film critics with their finger on the Asian pulse start a buzz about Takashi Shimizu's straight-to-video two-parter *Ju-on* (the bigger budget redo *Ju-on* was featured on the cover of *RM40* in 2003),

calling them "the scariest movies" they've ever seen. Enter producer Roy Lee, Hollywood's resident voodoo priest, who regenerated the already rotting corpse of *Ring* and set up the American remake helmed by Gore Verbinski. J-horror the global phenomenon was upon us. "J-horror" was, by the way, more a pejorative term, since the Japanese themselves have been using the "J-" prefix to designate "cool" new developments in everything from literature to soccer.)

But how did a genre that one of its best-known practitioners, Kurosawa, defines as "a uniquely Japanese way of expressing fear" manage to capture the world's imagination?

According to Japanese film authority and midnighteye.com co-creator Jasper Sharp, its central theme of technology versus ancient traditions spoke to just about anyone: "J-horror appeals to universal fears, which is why the films have traveled as far as they have and why producers such as Takashi Ishio have been so successful at specifically targeting his films at overseas audiences."

Indeed, while most of the writing on the genre seemed to make a point about how "Japanese" its characteristics were and how different it was from what Hollywood horror was offering at the time, its creators had in fact plundered Western horror cinema to their hearts' content. Sharp: "Japanese genre fiction has always benefitted from this cross-fertilization between its own myth and folklore and that of outside. Nakata himself was quick to admit the influence foreign films like *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* had on his seminal version of *Ring*."

In this light, the debt Takashi Shimizu's "departure" from J-horror, *The Stranger Within* (2004), owes to H.P. Lovecraft is perhaps not so surprising. There are few greater masters of tales about ancient fears burrowing through the veneer of modern civilization than writers such as Lovecraft and Arthur Machen. That the latest entry in the ongoing saga of Japanese horror is an adaptation of Machen's 1894 novella *The Great God Pan* by *Ring* scribe Hiroshi Takahashi (that should dispel the notion that in horror there exists such a thing as a "uniquely Japanese" film).

Further case in point is the recent spate of tongue-in-cheek splatter of *The Machine Girl*, Tokyo Goro Police and *Frankenstein Girl vs. Vampire Girl*. All spawning from the stable of producer Yoshinori Ohta, the man behind Mike's outrageous *Pulse: The New Generation* (1997), these films are wild concoctions of every genre trope imaginable except J-horror. From the outset they were aimed at the North American market, which also holds true for genre legend Shinya Tsukamoto's long-awaited third *Tetsuo* film, *Tetsuo: The Devil Man*, which stars Tokyo-based American actor Eric Ross. After years of the West looking toward the East for its scares, the tables appear to be turning again.

Five Trends in Fright Fiction

FROM THE PAST THIRTEEN YEARS

1 YOUNG ADULT HORROR

While horror's storied past has lasted for hundreds of years, the market categorization of "young adult" is a relatively new phenomenon. R.L. Stine certainly opened the doors for teen horror in the 1990s with his phenomenally successful *Fear Street* series, but it didn't truly blossom until the release of the *Hunger* *Potter* novels and the horror-*Ita* *Twilight* books, which are notable for having as wide a readership amongst adults as youths. In their wake, the floodgates of YA fiction have split wide open with best-sellers now being amongst *Readers'* fast-growing sales demographic. Of course, this has led to a new influx of genre titles — everything from teen *Twilight*-rip-offs to the much darker, bloodier offerings of Darren Shan (*The Cirque du Freak* and *Demonata* series) and Scott Westerfeld (*Pepet*).

2 PRINT-ON-DEMAND AND THE RISE OF INDIE PUBLISHING

As the internet came of age, so did print-on-demand services — essentially companies that would produce small runs of novels for small presses and individuals alike. This allowed aspiring authors, much like independent bands before them, to release professional-looking works without being beholden to a publisher. Furthermore, with home computers now powerful enough to run high-end graphics and layout software, almost anyone can start their own small press. While this undoubtedly resulted in a certain amount of unedited crap, it also gave several up-and-coming writers their first break, such as David Moody, who published his horror novel *After* through his own imprint and subsequently sold the film rights to it within months of its release.

3 NOVEL PODCASTING/ BLOGGING

The podcasting and blogging of novels, usually as daily or weekly serials, opened yet another avenue for horror scribes to get their tales to readers sans publisher. The interesting thing about this movement, of course, is just how many of its pioneers ended up with traditional publishing deals in the end, among them David Wellington (*Monster Island*), Christie Priest (*Four and Twenty Blackbirds*), Scott Sigler (*EarthCore*) and David Wong (*John Dies at the End*).

OCTOBER 2004

Amie Rice declares in a *Moscow* article that henceforth she would "write only for the Lord."

OCTOBER 29, 2004

If it's Halloween, it must be time for *Saw*! The first installment in the series is released.

FEBRUARY 14, 2005

YouTube.com emerges to give the horror directors of tomorrow a place to gain fans and test their chops.

MARCH 2005

Rue Morgue goes to eleven issues a year.

APRIL 26, 2005

The godfather of psychology, Sigmund Freud, dies at age 83.

JUNE 24, 2005

George A. Romero's *Land of the Dead* is the first of three new *Dead* films from the zombie master.

4 MONSTERFACING THE CLASSICS

It all started with Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, which injected apocalyptic-underaction into the Jane Austen classic, becoming an instant best-seller in spring 2009. The bandwagon jumping began almost immediately, with other newly monsterfied works of highbrow literature, including *Sweeney and Sensibility* and *Sea Monsters* and *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*. While it's unlikely to stick, it does mark one of the most unusual and unexpected horror lit trends to emerge of late.

ROBERT KIRKMAN, THE CURRENT KING OF ZOMBIE COMICS, WEIGHS IN ON WHY THE FORMAT GOT A LOT GRIMMER SINCE THE '90s.

Putrid Panels

When *Rue Morgue* debuted in 1997, horror comics were at something of a crossroads. On the one side you had Vertigo with titles such as *Sandman*, *Hellblazer* and *Swamp Thing* focusing on characterization and truly innovative, epic stories. In the opposing corner were more sensationalistic titles, such as the overrated *Spawn* and the execrable *Lady Death*, which placed more emphasis on gore, sex and sudden shocks. And somewhere in the middle was *Hellboy*, which was starting to garner attention but still a ways away from becoming a sensation.

Then a funny thing happened: the comics industry collapsed in on itself. After years of pandering to the collector's market with silly gimmicks such as variant 3-D foil/glow-in-the-dark covers, multiple company-wide crossovers and countless first issues, readers began to turn away in droves. Hardest hit were the superhero comics, which were up to that point the bread and butter of the industry. Publishers realized that they would have to offer more than long underwear to survive.

Suddenly, the playing field was right for new and innovative horror titles to emerge and the first decade of the 21st century has seen tremendous growth in the genre. One of the most celebrated—and horrifying—titles of the past decade has been the unflinching zombie apocalypse saga *The Walking Dead*, which debuted in October of 2003 and has been going strong ever since. More than perhaps any other current title, it's a product of its time.

"I can't say for certain that the series would have happened at all if 9/11 hadn't put the end of the world on everyone's mind, including mine," allows creator Robert Kirkman. "That time of uncertainty and paranoia really did put me in the mindset of creating a series like this."

Zombie-themed titles exploded in the wake of *The Walking Dead*, reaching their apex with the wildly popular *Marvel Zombies* (the first two *MZ* miniseries were written by Kirkman), in which the costumed superheroes themselves became rotting carcasses.

Kirkman points out that the trend was also spurred on by the boom in zombie movies: "*Dawn of the Dead* and *28 Days Later* didn't hurt. I'm sure. Aside from being good—and I do think that *The Walking Dead* is a good comic—I think it benefited from being in the right place at the right time."

5 ZOMBIES, ZOMBIES AND MORE ZOMBIES

As with films, video games and comic books, the undead shuffled *en masse* into fiction and non-fiction alike. From kitschy zombie cocktail menus and survival guides to varying analyses of George A. Romero's filmic output (*Diogenes of the Living Dead*, et al.) to best-selling novels, such as Max Brooks' *World War Z* and Brian Koppelman's *The Rising*, the shamblers were never more than a stone's throw away from storylines over the last thirteen years.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

man credits as kicking off the most recent comic book horror boom in 2003) are not only telling compelling ongoing horror stories, they're also managing to take older concepts—whether they be Lovecraft, vampires or zombies—and give them a new spin. All of sudden vampirism and zombies are the results of a virus and not a product of the supernatural. Whereas older horror comics tended to stay within the established conventions of horror lore, these are deliberately creating new mythologies in order to entice readers who have become jaded by the rules of the genre.

It's a gamble that's been paying off for both the industry and the fans. Horror comics are growing tremendously in popularity, as evidenced by the number of new publishers that have entered the field. Even as recently as 1997, the industry was still dominated by DC and Marvel, although companies such as Dark Horse and Image had managed to gain a solid foothold. A quick glimpse at the racks now, however, will reveal many new players such as IDW, WildStorm (a subsidiary of DC), Radical, Zenescope, Devil's Due, Boom! and Bluewater. Not coincidentally, a large percentage of these companies' output is horror or horror-related.

"I think that as time goes on more and more horror comics will succeed in finding an audience," adds Kirkman. "Which is something I'm really happy about. Any genre that can thrive in comics that isn't superheroes is a good thing for the industry as a whole. We've been relying on capes for too much for far too long."



TWO EXPERTS DISCUSS THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY'S UNSTOPPABLE MONSTER

Grim Games

by MONICA S. KUEBLER



The advancement of technology has affected no medium more than video games, which have grown into a multi-million-dollar industry that now competes with the Hollywood machine for our entertainment dollars. Horror titles, including *Bioshock*, *Dead Rising* and *Left 4 Dead*, have not only become best-sellers, but have won critical accolades and awards. We asked Richard Dansky, a writer at Ubisoft Entertainment, and Daniel Ramirez, staff writer for horror-video-games.com, to weigh in on the ever-shifting landscape of horror gaming.

Why do you think that horror games have grown so popular over the last thirteen years?

RD: It's largely been due to the fact that the technology is now good enough to support more types of horror games. "Survival horror" has been around since at least the original *Alone in the Dark* but it wasn't really until recently that we got to a point as an industry where we could make other genres of games where the focus was on horror, not on core mechanics. *Doom's* a shooter, but *Doom 3* is definitely a horror game because the

AUTUMN 2005

Nicolas Minier's French Sarkozy inches off unrest, inspires a new wave of Woody French horror films.

OCTOBER 5, 2005

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* novel is released, doing for vampires what Harry Potter did for wizards.

OCTOBER 26, 2005

Mark Gail launches *Showtime's Masters of Horror* TV anthology series.

DECEMBER 2005

Just in time for Christmas, Marvel Comics launches the soon-to-be blockbuster two-issue *Marvel Zombies*.



JANUARY 26, 2006

Critic David Edelstein coins the term "zombie porn" in a *New York Magazine* article.

systems and the tech and the storytelling techniques are good enough to allow the monsters to be more than just targets to aim at.

DR: Advances in technology have not only made it possible for better graphics, but the additional increased in memory has allowed for more choices on the part of the player. Horror movies, for the most part, are a passive form of entertainment. Horror games allow the player to determine how the story will play out and as a result, add another level of suspense. As for the story, I think that games are finally being treated like a serious form of entertainment; as a result more time is being taken with the story and character development.

How have horror games advanced to immerse players deeper into these chilling storylines?

DR: I think the best example of larger storage mediums affecting storytelling in video games is the recent game *Heavy Rain*. ... You play as four characters trying to solve the crimes of a serial killer. Throughout the game you have to make all kinds of decisions to determine how the ending will play out.

There is no guarantee your characters will make it to the end, or you will save the kid, or if the killer will get away. There really is no way to say you won or lost the game as the ending could be anything and who's to say one ending is better than another? The smallest decisions will affect the rest of the game and as a result, there is a ton of possible stories on that game disc.

DR: I think the key element to the evolution of horror games has been the understanding that it's the player that's the key, not the critters or the gore or anything else. Combine that with the constantly improving technology for interacting (or messing) with the player, and that's why the games have been able to get better and better. If you look at something like *Elemental Darkness*, where the metagame actively involves the player — adjusting volume, threatening to erase saved games, blinking the screen — you see the moment where I think horror games took the next step, because there was clear evidence of the game affecting the player, not the player character.

Have horror games grown more graphic?

DR: Actually, I don't think they have, relative to their surroundings. There was a huge outcry about violence in video games back in 1975, with [the arcade game] *Death Race*. What has changed is the technology, which has allowed that violence to be depicted differently. ... If games are perceived as more "gory," it may be because they're interactive, or because only the gory ones make the headlines, or because we automatically link the word "game" with "kids' stuff."

DR: I think the gore and blood that's used now just looks a lot better. Gore has been in games since they started. I think the reason games may seem gorier is because most games are shooting for realism. Take a game like *Silent Hill*; you can have a game with body parts and no blood but it's not going to look real to anyone. ... Some developers think that more gore equals more sales. Anyone who's played *Manhunt 2* knows this isn't true. All the hype over that game and in the end it was mediocre and got more attention than it deserved.

AFTER YEARS OF CRITICAL SNEERS AND JEERS, EXPLOITATION AND CULT FILMS HAVE FINALLY FOUND RESPECT.

The Rise of Trash Cinema

As the face of modern horror cinema has evolved over the last thirteen years, so has the way critics and audiences have embraced the once-marginalized genre films of the past. No longer is critical appreciation reserved for acclaimed art house movies and Hollywood message films, the last decade or so has seen an increased stream of well-researched, often beautifully illustrated cult film books that gleefully re-evaluate all manner of sleazy, ugly and crudely fashioned "trash."

Just 30 years ago, dodgy no-budget productions such as *The Corpse Grinders*, *Night of the Bloody Apes* and *Manstroid* were considered unwatchable by most mainstream critics, but that's changed. Now, even ultra-low-budget directors such as Ray Dennis Steckler and Al Adamson have been reintroduced as authentic auteurs.

"We're talking about creations concocted on the fly under extreme limitations, often made by desperate, if driven, characters," says Jeremy McDougall, author of the groundbreaking biography *The Ghastly One: The Ser-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan* (2003). "No time, no money and, at least by the standards of many, no talent. Such restraints can lead to interesting artistic by-products — a certain rawness, an immediacy, a sometimes excruciating 'realness' that can't be faked."

Stephen Thrower, author of *Nightmare USA: The Untold Story of the Exploitation Independents* (2008), a voluminous appraisal of independently produced 1970s and '80s horror, agrees. "Trash films may be technically shaky, imprecise and lack certain grace notes of quality, but they make up for it with energy, eccentricity and unpredictability."

These are just two recent film books that demonstrate this new critical approach of redefining trash cinema as important cultural ephemera. It's a long way from the derision once assigned to horror movies such as *The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant* and *Rabot Monster*, when they were covered in Michael and Robert Medved's *The Fifty Worst Films of All Time* (and *How They Got That Way*) (1978) and *The Golden Turkey Awards* (1980).

As the DVD boom of the mid-1990s made once-obscure horror films readily available, a new breed of cult film book emerged. Surveys such as Pete Tombs's *Monstrosity* (1986), Creation Books' *Creation Cinema* line, including *Monstrosity: An Illustrated Guide to Carnival Culture* (1998) and Eric Schaefer's *Blood! Daring! Shocking! True! A History of Exploitation Films, 1915-1959* (1999) take a more informed, researched approach, building on previous cult video guides, such as Michael J. Weldon's *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film* (1963) and Joe Kane's *The Phantom's Ultimate Video Guide* (1989).

Nightmare USA is a fundamental example of the trend. Reimposed of an earlier key cult text, Re/Search's *Acridly Strange Films* (1968), it combines extensive filmmaker inter-



COVERING THE GENRE

A BREAKDOWN OF WHO AND WHAT WE'VE FEATURED ON THE PAGES OF 180 ISSUES OF *ROU MAGAZINE*.

14	KILLERS	2	ZOMBIES
14	VICTIMS	2	AUTHORS
11	MUTANTS	2	GIANT MONSTERS
11	CLASSIC HORROR	2	MUSICIANS
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11	POSSESSED	2	OTHER GAMES
7	VAMPIRES		
7	SCANTILY CLAD		
	WOMEN		

COMPILED BY GARY CHANCE LAMK AND JESSA SINGLER



SEPTEMBER 12, 2006
Mike Brooks's zombie apocalypse epic *World War Z* is published. Over 600,000 copies sold so far.

SEPTEMBER 2008
Dave Karger books critics — including then-*AV* writer Chris Alexander — as part of an event he calls "Hating Bob."

MARCH 2007
Joss Whedon launches season eight of *Buffy* which ended in 2003 as an ongoing comic book series.



APRIL 6, 2007
Debut of an anthology of initial fan support, the \$53 million *Grindhouse* bombs at the box office.

JUNE 26, 2007
King Diamond's *Give Me Your Soul...*. Please drops, several Grammy nominations, best tracks over.

views and profiles with thoughtful analysis of neglected fare such as *Don't Go to the House*, *Misogynistic Massacre* and *The Love Butcher*; as well as Carleen Velsord's *They Came From Within: A History of Canadian Horror Cinema* (2004) and the late Bill Linder's *Seized Express: A Mind-Twisting Tour Through the Grandhouse Cinema of Times Square* (2002). *Nightmare USA* explores regional relevance and distinct personal styles.

"I wouldn't claim that [Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* and George Barry's *Death Bed: The Bed That Eats* deserve the same critical respect, but I do think they both deserve respect of some kind," observes Thewissen, who is presently working on a book about filmmaker Jess Franco.

McDonough cautions, however, "[Academics] drain the fun out of everything. It's like your parents showing up at the drive-in and exclaiming, 'Hey, kids, this *Debbie Does Dallas* is not so bad!' Some things are better off left drawing flies in the gutter. But you can't stop 'progress.'"

This compulsion to delve deeper into the trash cinema well has widely expanded and reshaped the cult film canon. The *Golden Turkey Awards* branched Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space* as the worst film ever in 1960, but few would still agree with that claim. Similarly, in their 1983 book *Midnight Movies*, critics J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum focused on four cult sensations — *El Topo*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *Pink Flamingos*, and *Eraserhead*, a list that seems almost quaint next to fresh rediscoveries such as *Alonso*, *The Hands of Fate* and *Wetworks* on *WetWeb*, or even more recent delights such as *Brul 2* and *Bend Sin: Shock and Terror*.

This nostalgic celebration of trash has not only manifested itself in numerous DVD grindhouse trailer compilations and in films such as *Grindhouse* and *The Last Skeleton of Cadaver*, it's even led to a fake historical account, in the form of Stephen Romano's *Shock Festival* book and companion DVD, both of which feature a "history" (including movie posters and trailers) for exploitation films that never existed.

"I wanted to write a novel in a way nobody had ever attempted before, and I wanted to fall back on this old idea I had as a thirteen-year-old kid to do a book of fantasy-world movie posters for films that never were," explains Romano.

He adds that celebrating trash cinema is more than just a fad. "Late-eight creature features and shows like *Mystery Science Theater 3000* and *Burns* have always been really popular. It's juvenile and snarky and outflow. It's just that new generations

come along and make it their own in new ways. We have YouTube and Blu-ray now, iPhones and stuff, and it isn't never gonna go away, man. Once you get the fever, it hooks in and hangs out!"



THE INTERNET HAS RESHAPED EVERYTHING IN THE GENRE. THE ONGOING CHALLENGE IS FIGURING OUT HOW TO ADAPT.

Digital Demons

by STACE PENDER

It goes without saying that the Internet has had a profound effect on the lives of virtually every horror fan. Whether it's tracking down a copy of a long out-of-print gem or looking up the name of that guy who played that guy who got killed in that movie, if you've got access to a computer, then you've got access to anything and everything that has to do with the genre. Over roughly the last thirteen years, that access has transformed the world of horror movies, from the most bloated Hollywood productions down to the micro-budget backyard affairs.

Once upon a time, fans had to wait for new issues of their favorite horror publications to let the stands before they'd be privy to insider information on films. Today, it's difficult to walk into a theatre and see a movie you know absolutely nothing about — there are daily reports from film sets, countless production stills, and forums full of rabid fan activity. Sometimes, even scripts and work footage are leaked online. When it was announced that writer/director Rob Zombie would be remaking John Carpenter's *Halloween*, fans immediately began frothing at the very idea of it. "Protests" were organized before a single scene was shot, fake posters were created, and creaking call sheets and drafts of Zombie's script soon made the rounds on the 'net.

"I think it ultimately is a bad thing," says Zombie. "I think a lot of the fans run the experience for themselves in advance. They go in, they go, 'Well, I already read the script and I know every plot twist and I know every possible thing that could happen!' Everybody's scrutinized. At least half the information that you read all the time is completely false. But what are you gonna do?"

While a script review and behind-the-scenes footage may be what readers expect on a daily basis from horror news outlets now, it took years for these genre-based websites to earn the kind of clout to enable them to deliver it. Even the most well-known ones were established by fans who simply wanted to talk about the genre they love so much. "The Three Idiots Guide to Horror," for example, was born in 1996, changed hands over the years and slowly became the venerable *Horror.com*. Staci Layne Wilson, who has been writing for the site for more than five years, experienced the growing pains of online journalism.

"I had to beg and plead, send stats, promise first-born sons, etc., just to get a video interview," she recalls. "Publicists wanted to have nothing to do with online writers and reporters. They did not see that online was not going away."

Ryen "Rotten" Turek, managing editor of *ShockTillWeDrop.com*, initially had to resort to creative means to get what he wanted. He recalls, "There was a serendipitous sense of how I went about gathering interviews and information. Companies didn't want to talk to me? Okay, I'll find a friend of a friend who knows the director and request a chat. Or, I'll hit up a horror convention and talk to the guests there for a retrospective piece and to gather scoops on upcoming projects."

Fans such as Turek began blogging about horror to begin with in large part because the mainstream genre sites didn't meet their needs. *Groovy Age of Horror* (groovyageofhorror.blogspot.com) began when owner Curt Purcell scoured the web for vintage horror paperbacks. Disatisfied with the scant information available, he simply began his own site. *Groovy Age* was part of a small but strong group of horror blogs that sprang up in 2004 to 2005, each concentrating on a differ-

ent niche, from vampires to gaudi and everything in between. It was a close-knit group that encouraged discussion.

"I was dying to fill up my sidebar with links to other horror blogs, but these just weren't any!" recalls Purcell. "The few horror blogs I added together and interacted pretty closely, mostly in each other's comments, and necessarily interacted much, much more than today. After that, horror blogs seemed to spring up in waves. All of a sudden, there'd be another five or six going like gangbusters that everyone scrambled to welcome to the neighborhood. Now there are a zillion."

While it's not surprising that PR firms would now want to use blogs and websites to promote their products, a strong web presence for the films themselves is essential. This is thanks, in no small part, to the massive success of *The Blair Witch Project*. Everybody knows somebody — or, perhaps, is somebody — who felt for the viral marketing campaign of the film. The simple website from the days of dial-up was presented as 100 percent truth: three documentary filmmakers had gone missing in the woods of Maryland, but the footage they shot in those woods had been found.

"It immediately caught on," remembers Eduardo Sanchez, *Blair Witch* co-creator and builder of the film's original site. "We had a discussion board and got a lot of traffic there. I don't know the specific numbers but this was 1998, this was way before YouTube or Facebook and the size of the web was probably one percent of what it is now. We didn't have any money, so we basically paid \$10 a month to host it and that was our marketing budget. By the time the film got into Sundance we had a mailing list of about 10,000 people."

Since the 1996 launch of *blairwitch.com*, audiences have gotten a lot more savvy and cynical. We're no longer apt to believe the "true stories" just because they're online. Still, websites have become the bedrock for movie marketing and no film, no matter how large or small, can go without one. (As Turek notes, "Studios and indie filmmakers will try anything to get your attention to promote their film.")

The Internet has remixed the nature of interaction between artists, fans, journalists and companies, making it more difficult for many print-based outlets to compete. But is the future strictly digital?

"The web is straining journalism and I don't necessarily know if I dig the changes or not, but I do have to adapt to the demands," admits Turek. "I love big articles that reach deep and I love to write them. No one wants to read that type of stuff on their computer screen."

You're holding evidence of that in your hands right now. ☹

JULY 2007

Tim Lucas' *Dark Blood: All the Colors of the Dark* is published — the most lavishly studied of a genre director yet.

AUGUST 31, 2007

Rob Zombie reinvents Michael Myers as a white-trash serial killer with a paper-mâché fetish.

OCTOBER 19, 2007

30 Days of Night makes vampires sexy, a year before the Twilight-like transforms them into glibly BFFs.

JANUARY 19, 2008

Malia Nurmi, a.k.a. Vampire Girlz at US, Rue Morgue publishes final interview with her.

JUNE 27-29, 2008

The Alamo Rolling Rockshow presents a celebration of *Troll 2* in Morgan, Utah.

NOVEMBER 17, 2008

Left 4 Dead is released, putting all discussions about what you'd do during a zombie outbreak to the test.

The Cutting Edge

—DAVE KILGORE

As our 13 Years of Fear feature has proven, technology and real-world trauma are the genre's biggest motivating factors. Because there is no shortage of things to fear or lack of ways to express our anxieties through art — particularly movies, which have become so accessible to everyone, everywhere — the horror fan's world keeps on getting bigger and bigger. Because we connect so strongly, so personally to terror tales, we're as loyal as ever,

too. While this results in sequels and remakes galore, it also means that horror has become a cutting-edge platform for artists and companies to try new things with less fear of failure. Of course, the more technological we become the more we seek genuine human experiences. To discover what this means, we consulted three experts who really understand the ebb, flow and evolution of fright films.



Colin Geddes has been programming the Midnight Madness section of the Toronto International Film Festival since 1987 and witnesses the latest in genre trends before the rest of us.

What are some of the major changes you've observed over the last thirteen years?

I'm starting to see more accessible horror films from Southeast Asia and Central Europe and these films are trying to cater to audiences raised on Western cinema, so often they are devoid of any root in local culture. That lack of cultural identity however makes the films generic Western imitations at best. ... I expect to see more paranoia-based horror films coming from areas of the world poised on economic breakdown, such as Greece and Iceland.

Would you say your Midnight Madness audience has changed?

I think over the years the audiences have become more sophisticated. When the series first started, there was more of a campy, silly element to the films they wanted to see, whereas now they demand smarter, darker and edgier films rather than just TSA and blood and gore.

Horror-themed film fests are popping up everywhere, even though home theatre systems are becoming more commonplace. Why is this?

Because of the shrinking world of film distribution and exhibition, festival audiences are looking to see and enjoy films en masse with their peers, something which might otherwise be missing from the modern horror fan's experience. Watching a film with a giggling, terrified mass of 1000 people in an auditorium is very different from renting it at Blockbuster or downloading it.



Former President of Acquisitions and Co-Productions at Lionsgate, producer Peter Block shepherded hits such as *The Grudge*, *The Descent* and *Saw* into North American theatres. He left Lionsgate to start independent film company A Bigger Boat, which recently released Adam Green's *Frozen*.

You're known for bringing foreign talent to North American audiences, so where are you casting your eye these days?

The French are extremely intense when it comes to horror and there's also a new crop of directors coming from the UK horror scene. We just recently brought on a young UK director named Mark Tonderai who's known in England for a film called *Host*. He's signed on for our project *House at the End of the Street*, which we like to describe as a "teenage Psycho."

How is technology affecting what you do?

The business model for successfully producing has changed significantly over the last five years and will keep shifting radically. ... Technology is increasingly important and changes almost daily, affecting every aspect of filmmaking from pre-production all the way into the release strategy. The avenues of distribution are also being modified and include some exciting new prospects in video-on-demand, as well as shortened release windows. Overall, it's all about adapting and trying new things.

Is the current boom in remakes and sequels going to slow any time soon?

There will always be remakes and sequels as long as the audience keeps coming back for more. I think that soon the business will even out a bit and there will be a proportionate amount of original content to remakes and sequels.



David J. Skal is the author of *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror*, *Hollywood Gothic* and *Reclaiming the Vampire*, plus he's produced and appeared in various documentaries on classic horror.

What evolves the genre more than anything else?

I hope I've made a convincing argument in my books that war and its metaphors (like death and its metaphors — war being the biggest death-magnifier in human existence) is the driving dumbest behind modern horror entertainment. It's not a matter of long-term or short-term, it's an essential and permanent underlying reality. Now that we've truly entered an Orwellian world of endless war for profit, it shouldn't be surprising that horror entertainment is bigger and more profitable than ever.

In terms of the current "monster show," vampires are in vogue. What are bloodsuckers tapping into culturally?

Addiction, recovery and various forms of co-dependence seem to colour our current vampire tales to an unprecedentedly pronounced degree. *Twilight* and its insatiable obsession aside, it's interesting that vampirism traditionally represented displaced sexuality, but today's vampires indulge in blood-drinking plus a lot of sex, especially homo-erotic/lesbian sex. Just watch *Fue Blood*. The children of the night are having their stake and eating it, too.

Do we need monsters now more than ever?

Whenever we feel especially dumb-ah, the more we crave high-stimulation fixes. Pulse-pounding horror movies reliably address the need, even when — or maybe especially when — they revolve around living death itself. ... Until everybody on Earth is completely personalized and zombieified, there will always be a useful function for the horror catharsis. When people finally stop flocking to zombies and vampires will be the time to be really afraid. ☹

DECEMBER 4, 2009

Original *Famous Monsters of Filmland* editor and genre icon Forrest J Ackerman dies at 92.

FEBRUARY 4, 2009

Criminals iconic villain Lex Luthor dies at age 62.

APRIL 4, 2009

Pulse and *Prejudice* and *Zombieland* introduces the undead to Jane Austen.

OCTOBER 16, 2009

Paranormal activity remake, releases the \$15,000 original to theatres instead.

MARCH 2010

Thomas Edison's *Frankenstein* turns 100. The silent short is the first adaptation of the 1916 tale.

JULY 2010

After years of legal limbo, a reborn *Famous Monsters of Filmland* is set to launch.

CONGRATULATIONS

RUE MORGUE

ON 100 ISSUES!

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT

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100

RUE MORQUE MAGAZINE

Presents

Nightmare Gallery

Curated by

GARY PULLIN

IF YOU'RE A REGULAR READER OF *RUE MORQUE* you'll have noticed that we're great admirers of the painted page – as much as we are of the written word and moving picture. Over the last thirteen years, many a candle has been held up to some of the most unique (Kris Kuksa) and influential (H.R. Giger) visionaries alive or dead (Hieronymus Bosch). Looking back at the past 100 issues, you'll find eclectic examples of artists whose work goes bump in the night (Simon Marsden, XNO, Pooch), gets under your skin (Bob Tyrrell, Vincent Castiglia), invokes the playfully morbid (Jason D'Aquino, Mark Ryden), summons demonic vixens (Coop), immortalizes personal demons (Joe Coleman, Paul Booth) and breathes vivid life into monsters, both classic and contemporary (Basil Gogos, Daniel Home, Tom Kuebler, Chet Zar).

In celebration of our 100th, we approached some of our favourite artists – both well-established and up-and-coming – and asked them to submit one original piece that represents a personal nightmare, along with a statement about what the work represents to them. Is it a spectre under the bed that keeps your night light on? A potent phobia that causes the cold sweats? Something lurking in the depths? We kept the theme open enough to allow for a variety of interpretations, and you may be surprised at what they came up with, and why. Lastly, the artists of *Rue Morgue* joined in so you can see what gets our own black hearts a-racing.

So thank you to all the artists, present and past, who have granted us permission to stain our pages with their dark works.

Now, Dear Reader, it's time to step inside the Nightmare Gallery...



WILLIAM BASSO

The Pale Thing

"Unable to move a muscle, I observe it slowly emerge out of blackness... suddenly, it's upon me, the hideous mouth at my throat."

basso-art.com

2. KRIS KUKSI

The Headless Encounters

"A few years ago I had a series of dreams that involved intense sexual activity between a group of headless men and one woman. These dreams were of an orgy-like fervor in which the headless men could still function and have senses despite having no head, and could please and satisfy the woman who appeared normal and enjoyed the encounter."

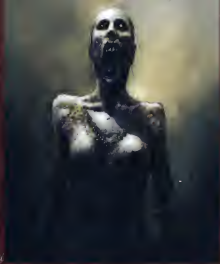


3. SIMON MARSDEN

*Grandon Chateau,
Auvergne, France*

"While photographing for a book titled *Ghosthunter: A Journey Through Haunted France* in 2006, I came across a ruined chateau in the mysterious Auvergne region, where I suffered a frightening sense of déjà vu that haunts me to this day."

slipstreammag.com



4. **NAI JONES**
The Screamer

"A recurring theme that runs through my work is isolation, a single figure set in a barren landscape. The lone figure, screaming with no one to hear, chest opened and heart torn out... frustrated, alone, scared, torn apart and sewn back together."

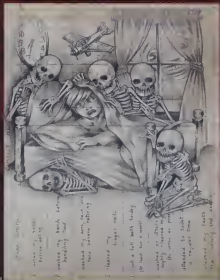
naijones.com



6. **DAN HARDING**
Crawling Teeth

"My most vivid nightmares are the ones where I'm attacked by a shark or overrun with spiders. The two together as one is horrifying indeed!"

danhardingart.com



5. **JASON D'ADDIO**
Nightmare

"An apple a day may indeed keep the doctor away, but it seems that proper grooming is not proof against flesh-eating, reanimated skeletons... oh well."

jasondaddio.com



7. **JAMES FISHER**
Like Hands

"Losing my hands would be terrifying, however, losing the freedom to create with my hands would be grounds for insanity."

jamesfisher.com



8. **TRAVIS LOUIE**
The Hangover

"A fear of women
with large hands."
travislovie.com

9. **JASON EDMISTON**
Teeth

"Self-portrait based on one of my re-
curring nightmares that my teeth are
cracking and splintering, and falling
out of my mouth – despite frequent
dental appointments."
www.jasonedmiston.com



10. **VINCENT MARCONE**
Shadow monster

"In my dreams, a monster lurks at
the bottom of an abandoned wishing
well... waiting to erupt in a fury of
smoke and shadow, revealing an
alien silhouette fashioned with very
funny eyes – my own!"
mysteryskeleton.com

11. **JUSTIN ERICKSON**
Wound

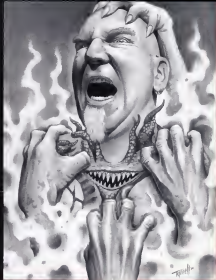
"As a child, I had several recurring
nightmares but none more frighten-
ing than this one, where I would start
digging into my face, ripping out
flesh à la *Pottergeist*."
www.justinerickson.com



12. CHET ZAR *Doomsday Soldier*

"Growing up during the second half of the Cold War, I dreamt about nuclear war a lot. Visually, it was very simple: I'd be on a hill watching a huge mushroom cloud spread out over my town. These dreams would always be accompanied by a feeling of dread."

chetzar.com



13. JOSHUA HOFFINE

Foghorn

"As a child, I was afraid to look through the keyhole into our upstairs hallway. I was afraid of something awful being there, waiting for me to look."

www.jhoffine.com

14. GHULISH GARY

Dread of Night

"I see myself sleeping, paralyzed and completely enveloped by an unknown force. The feeling of dread is inescapable. I wake up choking for air, disoriented and utterly terrified."

www.ghulish.com

15. BOB TYRRELL

Dirty Me To Hell

"I have this recurring dream where I'm falling or being pulled into a nightmare, like being dragged to hell. I'm sure it's the result of watching too many horror movies since I was six-years-old."

bobby-boy.com



16. CHAD MICHAEL WARD

I Dream of Zombies

"Zombies. Thanks to Romero and Fulci, these rotting fuckers will forever have an undead grip on my dreaming mind."

digitalapocalypses.com

RUE MORGUE CINEMA PRESENTS

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RODRIGO GUDIÑO,

RUE MORGUE'S FOUNDED, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER



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GILBERT KURLAND

"SUPREMELY
DISQUIETING."
FREDERICK BRUNY

"ONE FUCKED-UP
NUMBER."
JOEY DI CORALINO

"HORRIFYING, YET
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HYMNS *from the* HOUSE *of* HORROR

by TREVOR TUMINSKI, DAVE ALEXANDER and TOMB DRAGOMIR
Illustration by JUSTIN ERICKSON

IN HONOUR OF *RUE MORGUE'S* 100TH ISSUE, it gives us great pleasure to announce the release of a free, downloadable compilation album we've christened *Rue Morgue Radio Presents... Hymns from the House of Horror*. Thousands of horror bands have graced the pages and airwaves that emanate from this unholy place over the course of thirteen years, more than 300 radio shows and 100 magazines. We put our mishapen heads together and enticed a handful of

the many artists we believe best encapsulate the spirit of *Rue Morgue* into giving us exclusive mixes, previously unreleased tracks, obscure rarities and classic cuts for this morbid mixtape. It's only available for a limited time so read up on the artists here, then click over to rue-morgue.com or ruemorgueradio.com to download your copy, complete with printable, original artwork by Justin Erickson, and hosted by *Rue Morgue* Radio's proprietor of perpetual darkness, Tomb Dragomir.



01 "Rue Morgue Radio" THE CREEPSHOW Stomp Records

"When *RM* asked us to write them a song for Rue Morgue Radio, we wrote a fast little jingle and liked it so much, we made it into a full song and put it on our album *Run for Your Life*. The lyrics in the song became the theme for our album art, which Ghoulsh! Gary Pullin also had a huge part in. If *The Creepshow* and Rue Morgue were human, we would be 'doing it' with each other constantly!" SEAN "SICK BOY" MCNAB

THE MAIDEN BROADCAST OF OUR BLACK SOUNDTRACK JUST wouldn't be complete without our Creepshow-penned theme song! Tomb first sounded the alarms in *Atmos* when he nearly sold his soul for the Burlington, Ontario band's debut, and it's been a sordid band-mag love affair ever since. The little-horror-band-that-could has hit the big time now, having opened for the likes of Rancid, Tiger Army, The Green, Agnostic Front, Mad Sin and Demanded Are Go, and toured in such exotic locales as Japan and Australia. Bassist McNab and the rest of the creepers may be tireless road warriors but they were right in our backyard all along. TT

THECREEPSHOW.ORG

02 "Haunted Nursery" MIDNIGHT SYNDICATE Lullaby Records/Entire Productions



"This is one of the first songs Ed wrote for Midnight Syndicate. It appeared on our 1997 self-titled debut, then again on *Born of the Night* and *Out of the Darkness*." BRIAN GOSZKA

MUSICIANS SO SYNONYMOUS WITH Halloween they'd have to cancel the day without them, Midnight Syndicate craft lush, expansive soundscapes for the creepiest corners of your mind. The Ohio band's nightmare voyagers, Edward Douglas and Goszka, have been creating soundtracks for the imaginations for the past thirteen years, setting the industry standard for the world's top haunted attractions and amusement parks. Their dark harmonies have been featured at everything from Hugh Hefner's infamous Halloween parties to Monday Night Football and X-Box games. A dark lullaby seems like an easily fitting ode for the dawn of our new arrival, *Hymns from the House of Horror*. TD

MIDNIGHTSYNDICATE.COM

03 "Into the Cauldron" CAULDRON Sirenia



"It's about losing all hope and going all-or-nothing, fucking with fire and throwing it all in the pot to see what happens...or simply just being frustrated and fed up and throwing some pretty little witch into a boiling cauldron." JASON DECAY

OUT OF THE ASHES OF OLD SCHOOL THRASHERS GOAT HORN COMES THE similarly venomous heavy metal of Toronto's Cauldron. Call this track their "Sub-bath Bloody Sabbath," or as the long-haired thrumwate led by singer/bassist Jason Decay has coined it: "Straight up, rite heavy. It ponz, beer swilling, bulkit boiling metal." The fire's lit, the broth is hot, now prepare to be served! TT

MYSFACE.COM/CAULDRONMETAL

"'Black Dream' is a song about my girlfriend and I just escaping into the wonderful world of horror on the silver screen. During the time we were writing the *Do It Again* album, she was having a hard time going through chemo treatments. It was raining a lot at that time too. Our favourite thing to do on rainy days is to cook popcorn or a recipe out of one of Vincent Price's cookbooks and just slug around holding each other, watching Vincent Price movies. It is a great way to get your mind off the real-life horror. The lyrics are about some of the scary movies we watched during that time, and the title is about what it really was: a dream and a nightmare at the same time." EVIL PRESLEY



04 "Black Dream" THE INDEPENDENTS SMB Records

STRANGER THINGS MAY HAVE BUBBLED UP FROM THE SWAMPS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, BUT OUR FAVORITE IS The Independents. Since 1992, founders Evil Presley and Willy B have taken their love of punk, ska, psychobilly and all things ghoulish and written some of the most memorable tracks in Rue Morgue Radio rotation. The late, great Joey Ramone managed the band from 1996 to his death in 2001, and you can hear the spirit of the Ramones in the band's defiant, fist-pumping punk rawk sound. As Evil explains, "Black Dream" has a special place in his heart, and it perfectly encapsulates how our favourite horror flicks often feel like old friends. If you aren't singing along to this one, you're probably a corpse. GA

THEINDEPENDENTS.NET



05 "Return of the Living Dead" GHOULTOWN Zoviet Records

"As far as songwriting goes, 'Return of the Living Dead' ranks at the top of my personal favourites. After a few minutes of strumming out the spooky rhythms on my acoustic [guitar], I glanced up and saw the DVD case of one of my all-time favourite movies, *Return of the Living Dead*. That was all I needed. The title worked perfectly as the chorus and, after scriawling down some *Down of the Dead*-inspired lyrics to fill out the verses, my zombie tribute was complete." COUNT LYLE

ROUNDED UP OVER A DECADE ago in the sun-bleached badlands of Texas by frontman Count Lyle, Ghoultown has released four full-length albums, several EPs and singles, have been featured in a video game, comic book and, most recently, made a music video directed by Gita Grimsy and starring Elvira. This re-recorded version of "Return of the Living Dead" was released on the 2009 *Mistress of the Dark* doublepack, and perfectly showcases the six piece's distinctive hybrid of outlaw country, horror punk and monster metal — or as they put it, imagine if "Rob Zombie and Johnny Cash were tossed into a meat packer. Ghoultown is what would come out the other side." Z

GHOULTOWN.COM



06 "Banshee Beach" THE GASTLY ONES

Doorn

66 I remember hearing a tale about a surfer spot near Malibu that was so treacherous only the bravest surfers would dare enter. The spot didn't have a name but it was told that body parts would wash ashore now and then of surfers who had wiped out there. I thought I'd give the spot a name and a song that would go with it. Thus, Banshee Beach was born. **67** **BARON SHIVERS**

TAKING THEIR NAME FROM ANDY MILLIGAN'S SLICE OF CINEMATIC SLEAZE, THE GASTLY ONES ARE A QUARTET OF retro groovy ghosts in top hats and capes, who have been pounding out mostly monster-themed, instrumental surf tunes since '96. The Van Nuys, California creepers dropped this rare remix of the 2007 *Uncut* album song "Banshee Beach" to stir up the mad monster party. Nobody does "spooky surf" better, and this song proves why. **68**

GASTLYONES.COM



07 "Redneck Zombies (Tomb Dragoon Remix)" PSYCHO CHARGER

Independent

66 We were on the road somewhere and I thought, "What if the hillbillies in *Deliverance* were zombies?" When we started kicking around the idea of doing a remix of one of our songs, I knew Tomb was the man for the job. The level of creativity and production value that he brings to Rue Morgue Radio each week is off the hook and he spliced this song into a real party monster! "Redneck Zombies (Tomb Dragoon Remix)" is scheduled to appear as the bonus track on our upcoming CD, *Mark of the Psycho*. **67** **JIMMY PSYCHO**

NEW YORK CITY'S BLOODIEST BAND FUSES HOT PSYCHOBILLY fire with cold industrial steel for a unique sound bled out with bits of punk, surf and goth sleaze in the mix. With the band taking the stage in gasmasks and gitch, the live show spills enough blood to drown a prom queen! So far they have unleashed two solo releases, appeared on numerous compilations, on commercials for Spike TV and blew the doors off Rue Morgue's official festival of Fear 2009 after-party! **68**

PSYCHOCARGER.COM

09 "Nightmare World" THOSE POOR BASTARDS

Independent



66 This song was the catalyst for the whole *Abominations* Halloween EP. It's about that good old feeling of hopelessness and wishing for something that can never be. We tried for a Johnny-Cash-meets-Nightmare-Before-Christmas-type of sound. **67** **LOVESOME WYATT**

WITH ONE FOOT ON STAGE AND THE OTHER IN A GRAVE, THOSE POOR BASTARDS play "miserable and heart-sickening gothic country music." The terrible twosome of Lovesome Wyatt (vocals, guitar) and The Minister (bajo, bass, etc.)—both "legally certified holiness preachers" from Madison, Wisconsin—appeared on our radar back in *RM* 7/9 and have resurfaced once more with "Nightmare World," a pretty little ditty (previously only available on their limited EP *Abominations*) that'll have you swearing off sleep for good. **68**

THOSEPOORBASTARDS.COM



10 "My Body's a Zombie for You" DEAD MAN'S BONES

RM/Epitaph

66 The smell of my breath / From the blood in your neck / I hold my soul from the land unknown. **67**

"MY BODY'S A ZOMBIE FOR YOU"

I NITIALY SLATED FOR THE SOUND-track of a play about a monster/ghost love story, "My Body's a Zombie for You" encapsulates the strumma of classic doo-wop, chamber pop and haunting melodies that make up the musical graveyard that is *Dead Man's Bones*. Actor Ryan Gosling and pal Zach Shields may seem an unlikely pair to deliver the ghoulish goods but this track from their self-titled debut album (which has barely left our gramophone) will give you chills. Teaming up with a kid's choir to tell "tales of zombies with broken hearts, and children singing the joys and pains of being alive, or being dead," Gosling and Shields are easily two of the coolest new crops on the block.

DEADMANSONES.NET



11 "Hand of Glory" FORBIDDEN DIMENSION

Reckless Records

66 This version of "Hand of Glory" was recorded in 1983 as the B-side to the *Dial 'M' for Monster 7".* The lyrics were inspired by a '50s comic strip by one of my favourite *Word* Tales artists, Matt Fox. **67** **JACKSON PHIBES**

ON A COLD CALGARY NIGHT WAY back in 1968, horror freak Jackson Phibes, aka Tom Bagley (a one man band with a "cheap-ass" drum machine and a sinister plan), created *Forbidden Dimension* with what we can only imagine was a thick jolt of lightning and the mummified corpse of a 1960s garage punk. Fuzzy, buzzy guitars, super-distort-o-veals and a dedication to all things spooky. *FD* might be the coolest Canadian band you've never heard. Coffins and crowns and reverb, oh my!

FORBIDDENDIMENSIONONKOPHAGY.COM



12 "Something Weird"
ZOMBINA AND THE SKELETONS
Faded in Records

"'Something Weird' is the secret track from the 2009 album *Out of the Crypt and Into Your Heart*. It's a tribute to the excellent horror/exploitation video label of the same name, and also a song about something weird happening..." **ZOMBINA**



13 "Grave Robber At Large"
CREATURE FEATURE
Damen Records

IN 2005, SINGER/GUITARIST CURTIS RX AND ERIC X (SAMPLERS, SYNTH) EMBARKED ON AN ODYSSEY OF DARK CARNIVAL tunes inspired by everything from Danny Elfman and Goblin to Edward Gorey and Ray Bradbury. Rich, playful and cinematic, their debut, *The Greatest Show Unwritten*, is full of terrible tales of zombies ("Ain for the Head"), kidnapping ("Bound and Gagged") and alien invasion ("Look to the Skies"). For Hymns, the beastly boys from LA have graced us with the freshly embalmed "Grave Robber at Large," a world premiere track from their yet-to-be-named follow-up. This catchy cut feels like the title track from a ghoulish cult flick yet to be made. **DA**

CREATUREFEATUREMUSIC.COM

14 "Saint of Killers"
DAMN LASER VAMPIRES
Devil's Run Records



"Sometimes we're on stage and I feel that, apart from the folks dancing and having fun, a different kind of audience is standing around, listening closely. Several times I've known that among them is somebody who came to listen to this song because it talks straight to him. This is not about salvation or redemption, this is just our way of getting closer to that dangerous individual and saying, 'I know how you feel.'" **RON SELISTRE**

THIS BRAZILIAN TRIO FRONTED BY RON SELISTRE CAUGHT OUR EAR IN *RAW60* with its unusual blend of gothic punk, new wave, psychobilly and... polka! The debut, *Godham Beggars Syndicate*, wove a common thread through the darkness with a ghostly sincerity that simultaneously scared and rocked us — no better illustrated than on the standout cut "Saint of Killers," the band's poetic olive branch to the dark passenger in all of us. **TT**

MYSNICE.COM/DAMNLASERVAMPIRES



15 "Hurt"
BALZAC
Mantis Records

"The song 'Hurt' takes heavy influence from Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Fusing the creepy atmosphere of the film with our horror rock sound, the end result is an energetic, dark pop number." **HIRUKU NISHIWAKA**

THE MISFITS' JAPANESE DOPPELGÄNGERS Balzac weigh in on Hymns with "Hurt," a rolly new slice of horror-punk pop rock from their forthcoming double album *The Birth of Hell*. Their legendary band they emulate endorses their re-imagining of the famous sound, even signing them to Mantis Records. It was back in *RAW17* that we first reported on this Osaka quartet that devoted itself heart, soul and skull to the '80s.

MISFITSRECORDS.COM



16 "The Lost Soul"
THE HANDSOME FAMILY
Crest Lee

"We first heard 'The Lost Soul' on a record called *The Watson Family*, in which Doc Watson and his family sit around and sing songs they wrote or learned as kids or sang in church. It was mind-boggling to imagine these sweet country people singing such a dark song in church, especially when most of their other songs were about licking groundhog gravy off their chin and other such Appalachian fun and games." **RENNIE SPARKS**

THE HUSBAND AND WIFE DUD OF BRETT AND REMMIE Sparks contribute their version of the traditional "The Lost Soul," previously only available on hard-to-find Bloodshot Records compilation *For a Decade of Sin* (2005). Harvesting a generous crop of doom and gloom, the Handsomes live up to their name with this beautiful, woful take on a standard, musically weighing the price of sin. **TT**

HANDSOMEFAMILY.COM

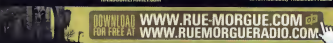


17 "Oil and Blood"
THE UNSETTLERS
phonograph

"'Oil and Blood' came from a nightmare I had about a little girl washing her face in the old porcelain sink filled with motor oil and animal blood. The only light in the room was a bare, swaying light bulb. Her shadow was playing a nasty old saw and what appeared to be a stringless violin. As the twisted sounds interlarded, she turned and said, 'I'd cut the head off a nickel for all your bed luck.'" **B.W. BRANDES**

THIS "8.9,10-PIECE BAND" BRINGS A WHOLE CREEPY ambience of instruments to the party, incorporating toy accordion, clarinet, flugelhorn, violin, glockenspiel and cassettes into its "funeral dirges for the living." At its best, the Montreal ensemble sounds like a post-bender Tom Waits picking fights at a flea market. But when settled down, as on "Oil and Blood" — the title track from the group's forthcoming sophomore album — nobody spins a mournful, candlelit melody like Unsettlers' singer B.W. Brandes and co. **TT**

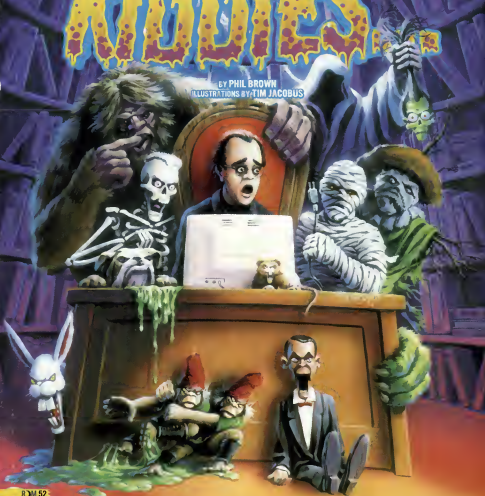
MYSNICE.COM/THEUNSETTLERS



URING THE 1990s, **R.L. STINE'S** CREEPY
CHILDREN'S BOOKS SOLD MILLIONS OF COPIES.
THE OFTEN RECLUSIVE, INCREDIBLY PROLIFIC
AUTHOR TELLS HIS OWN SPOOKY STORY.

GATHER 'ROUND, KIDDIES

BY PHIL BROWN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIM JACOBUS





**THE GOOSEBUMPS
WERE PURE FANTASY,
THEY WERE ALL FILLED
WITH CRAZY THINGS,
HAUNTED
MASKS AND
MONSTER
BLOOD.
R.L. STINE**



featured little else. Classic horror archetypes such as haunted houses, mummy's curses and werewolves figured heavily into the series, which Stine viewed as an homage to the 1950s creature features he and his brother loved as children. Many of the books even featured sensational titles, such as *It Came from Beneath the Sink*, which riffed on the names of popular horror movies of yore. The series distinguished itself from *Fear Street* in other ways, as well.

"It started with the age of the characters," Stine elaborates. "The *Fear Street* people were all fifteen, sixteen and seventeen. And that makes a big difference right from the beginning when you write because every single character in *Goosebumps* was twelve. Also, the *Goosebumps* were pure fantasy, they were all filled with crazy things, haunted masks and monster blood. A lot of the *Fear Street* stories were supernatural, but they all had to feel real."

The inaugural *Goosebumps* titles didn't set any sales records initially, but by the time the second round of novels hit store shelves in early 1993, the series had exploded. And unlike *Fear Street*, *Goosebumps* did raise the ire of certain parental groups, who opposed the books' occasionally violent content. The series placed fifteenth on the American Library Association's most frequently challenged books list of the 1990s. If anything, though, the attention only helped *Goosebumps* titles become more popular.

"The success was well beyond anyone's imagination and was all from word of mouth," recalls Stine. "It tapped into that secret network of kids telling other kids. There was no hype, no advertising and I didn't do any appearances. I just stayed at home writing. It was an amazing thing."

Suddenly, Stine was the most successful writer in his field. His *Goosebumps* series was selling four million books a month, so he diligently set about writing as many horror stories as he could manage. Fresh entries in the series were released at a steady clip and spin-off series such as *Goosebumps Series 2000* and *Give Yourself Goosebumps* were launched. Merchandising took off as well, and grew to include tie-in comic books and video games. Canada's YTV network even commissioned a television series based on the books.

"You never knew what you're going to get in television, and I was so busy writing all of those books that I had no time to write the scripts," says Stine. "Luckily, there were very smart people involved and they did a wonderful job. I was very happy with it. Although, I always liked it when kids would come to me and say, 'I liked the books better.'"

Though never quite as popular as the novels, the *Goosebumps* TV series ran for four seasons (1995 to 1998) and was a success in its own right. It adapted tales from throughout the *Goosebumps* book series and became an after-school favorite for many Canadian youngsters. The north-of-the-border production also led to a variety of amusing interactions for Stine.

"When I did signings in America, kids would always ask, 'How do I get on the *Goosebumps* show?' I'd tell them, 'You have to be Canadian.' And every time they'd say, 'What's that?'" A tribute to our school system," quips the author.



Given the massive success of *Goosebumps* and its various properties, it's surprising that the books haven't yet been adapted for the big screen, despite the many attempts to turn the literary franchise into a filmic one.

"Fox owned *Goosebumps* for a while and Tim Burton was attached, but nothing happened," says Stine. "All of the rights to *Fear Street* are with Disney and they actually had two scripts written, but they never went farther than that. I don't really understand the movie business. We're always talking to people, though, and we've made a lot of deals over the years."

Though open to the idea of other people adapting the *Goosebumps* brand into a movie, Stine has never had much interest in doing it himself. He's always been far too busy writing his books.

"I don't know how I did it, but I wrote a novel every two weeks," says Stine of his output during the *Goosebumps* heyday. "It sounds crazy now, and some people thought I was a commitment or something. But it was just me. I was home all the time writing. They wouldn't let me out much. Having that kind of success at that point was so exhilarating that I think it kept me going. I'm still doing a fair amount of writing, but it's cut down. I'm doing seven *Goosebumps Horrorland* books this year. For me, that's really relaxed."

The *Horrorland* series, aimed at middle school readers, features adventures set in a supernatural amusement park that the author dubs "the scariest place on Earth," and maintains the style and tone that Stine developed for *Goosebumps*, with a few new tricks designed to surprise the next generation.

"We did an interesting thing with the first round of *Goosebumps Horrorland* books," he explains. "The first twelve had a continuing serial in the back. I don't think anyone had ever done a monthly horror serial for kids that continues from book to book. There was a complete new *Goosebumps* story at the front of [each] book and then a chapter in the ongoing serial in the back."

Though the *Goosebumps* hysteria of the 1990s has passed, with the preteen and young adult sales charts now dominated by a certain boy wizard and a family of emo vampires, R.L. Stine has carved a special place for himself in the history of children's literature. He proved that horror has a place in the kids' section of bookstores and he taught an entire generation the joys of wondering what's lurking under the bed. He may not have achieved much critical success during his career, but Stine touched countless young readers, some of whom are now authors themselves.

"I'm getting books from quite a few children's authors now who say, 'You were my biggest influence,'" he says. "It is quite a thrill."

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PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT ERIN HAS HAD ENOUGH WITH HER STUDIES. FRUSTRATED, SHE AND HER FRIENDS JULIE AND DANNY DECIDE TO SPEND A RELAXING WEEKEND IN THE WOODS FAR FROM THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES. GATHERING UP SEVERAL MORE FRIENDS, THE GROUP HEADS INTO THE FOREST - BUT THEIR CAREFREE WEEKEND QUICKLY GOES DOWNHILL. WHEN AN UNEXPECTED STRANGER ARRIVES, THEIR FUN TURNS INTO A NIGHTMARISH RACE FOR SURVIVAL AS A PSYCHOTIC SLAUGHTERS THEM ONE BY ONE. ALONE, BLOODED, AND HUNTED, THE GROUP'S FRIENDSHIP IS PUT TO THE TEST... AND SECRETS FROM THEIR BLACK PASTS SURVIVE TO THE SURFACE TO UNLEASH HOLY HELL ON EVERYONE LEFT ALIVE.

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RUE MORQUE DOWNLOADS THE
TOP TEN iPhone APPS FOR HORROR FANS.

iScares

BY JEFF LABRECQUE

WITH THE iPhone BECOMING THE ULTIMATE MULTIMEDIA PLATFORM

— a cellphone/camera/computer/MP3 player/personal organizer/video game system — it didn't take long for applications to appear that are aimed squarely at horror fans. But searching for "horror," "scary" or even "Halloween" tends to reveal either kids' stuff or programs that simply recycle online public domain material or add zombies and pumpkins to an existing download — almost anyone, it seems, can crank out a half-assed app. We searched through hundreds of so-called horror-themed apps, read reviews and tested a bunch out, to come up with the top ten worthy of making your iPhone a little wicked.



SILENT HILL: THE ESCAPE

(Kosmos Digital Entertainment)

It ain't perfect, but it is the very first console horror franchise game to get an iPhone exclusive version. *Silent Hill: The Escape* is a first-person shooter set in a dark, dank, hospital-like labyrinth, where players have to pick up keys and batteries (for your flashlight) and shoot various creepy crawlies, including those faceless nurses. It's slow and a bit tough to maneuver, but the soundtrack is creepy and graphics are effectively claustrophobic. Good for a few scares. **B+**



BLOODY BOX

(J.L. Ruffe Thatt)

Simple but effective, this app produces disgusting squishing sounds, as if you were playing with someone's insides. Poke or shake the screen and — voila! — attract disgusted looks from everyone around you. **B-**



ZOMBIERVILLE USA

(Mafia Studios)

Welcome to Zombierville, USA, where you're a redneck with a gun and a re-animated corpse problem. Blast away those pesky rotters while picking up money (to buy more guns, of course) and ammo before you become an unhappy meal for the undead, who come fast and furious in this fun side-scroller. **B-**



THEREMINATOR

(Reared)

By making use of the iPhone's touch-screen capabilities, aspiring old-school monster movie soundtrack composers can control a virtual theremin by running their fingers across a grid that controls the pitch and volume. Additional bewicks, such as echo, tremolo, feedback and delay allow for a surprising range of creepy sounds. **B-**



HORROR RACING

(Chillagag)

Monster hot rods meet Rock 'n' Roll Racing (remember that battle car title for the Super Nintendo?) in *Horror Racing*. Choose your character (monster, giant eyeball) and car (including a hearse), and the race is on. Pick up bullets and explosives in order to eliminate the creepy competition. Mastering the tiny steering wheel in the corner of the screen takes practice — you gotta develop those deadly driver's skills! **B-**



HORROR MASTER TRIVIA

(Shibogami)

Fright film fanatics, it's time for a know-it-all challenge with *Horror Master Trivia*. Divided by themes such as The Classics, New Blood, 1980s Carriage, Women of Horror, 1960s Blood Bath and so on, you

start at ten questions and go up from there with each successive round. Get a certain percentage correct and you advance. While it begins ridiculously easy ("Who starred as Freddy Krueger?"), things do get tough ("What short film was the precursor to *The Evil Dead*?"). The only drawback is that it doesn't tell you the right answer when you get one wrong. **B-**



ZOMBIE PIZZA

(Waggy Entertainment)

This puzzle game requires you to make pizzas, according to the undead chef's recipes, in order to feed the ashy zombies banging at your door. The ingredients — heart, brains, guts, eyes, etc. — arrive on a conveyor belt, and you have to pick the right ones to create the right "za" for the mob. Screw up the order or drag your own hot and you're the next meal in the addictive tale. A free demo version is available too. **B-**



100 HORROR STORIES, NOVELS, AND SCARIES

(258 Woong)

Talk about a deadly deal. For \$0.99, you get 100 novels, novellas and short stories, including *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, *Phantom of the Opera*, most of Poe's output and some lesser known works by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. On top of this, it features some decent spooky noises and an "auto-scare" function, which unleashes a frightening sound when you're in the middle of a tale, giving those public domain staples a new spin. **B-**



FREAKY FOTOS PRO

(Wildabout Voodoo)

Start your own hoaxes by adding ghosts to your iPhone pics. *Freaky Fotos* has 22 to choose from, including creepy

kids and weird faces, and each one comes with its own story. To help them fit naturally into your shot, you can resize and choose the placement in the frame. There's no function to adjust transparency, unfortunately, but *Freaky Fotos* still makes a helluva spectral photo-bomb. **B-**



IPOSSESSED

(Jung Beomant)

Use *iPosessed* to turn your iPhone into a conduit for demonic noises by choosing whispers, screams, violent rattling, evil-speak, etc. Just set the timer (up to 999 seconds), then leave it within earshot. Or, better yet, swap iPhones with someone and watch him or her scream when the otherworldly noises begin. And touching the screen won't make the program go away. Victims have to hit the "home" button, which will take just long enough to rattle their cages. **B-**

All apps available at apple.com/iphone/apps-for-iphone/.



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—Robert Hood: Undead Backbrain

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GODS DAMNIT!

CLASH OF THE TITANS

Starring Sam Worthington, Liam Neeson and Ralph Fiennes
Directed by Louis Leterrier
Written by Travis Beacham, Phil Hay and Matt Mantis
Image

For disciples of Ray Harryhausen's 1981 stop-motion masterpiece, the very idea of a CG-laden remake is a blasphemy to the Olympian gods themselves. Yet this humble reviewer and devotee of the original was actually looking forward to it, seeing it as an opportunity to reinvent the tale for a new age of digital effects. Plus, the trailer was killer. Medusa, Pegasus and the Kraken were all there, along with some Lord of the Rings-style aerial photography punctuated by Pete Postlethwaite's stern call to action: "One day, somebody's gonna have to make a stand!" It all seemed to promise a *Clash of the Titans* re-worked as serious fantasy and epic drama.

However, the mad scramble to convert the movie into "Wew-D" 3-D in the weeks leading

up to its release should've been an early warning. Yet the shallow, callous cash grab of the phony 3-D is the least of this lamentable film's problems.

It suffers from a joyless tone, monotonous colour palette and wonky cast – Ralph Fiennes as Hades essentially reprises his role as Lord Voldemort, and as for Liam Neeson as Zeus? It's hard to take anyone seriously as the "King of the Gods" who had a major role in *The Phantom Menace*. Yet, the worst part of this remake is that, while it hits many of the same big moments and set pieces as the original, everything is motivated by a completely different set of narrative events. So instead of a simple story about a hero fulfilling his destiny to save the woman he loves, the tale is twisted into a tiresome revenge saga with an angry Perseus (Sam Worthington) obsessed with destroying Hades for killing his father and too angry at the gods to accept his true calling as a demigod. Basically, it's Beverly Cross' original script with all the magic, wonderment and romance sucked out in favour of a sullen, hyper, action-driven narrative that's

cranked up to eleven at all times. It doesn't help that Sam Worthington has all the charisma of a plank of wood.

But definitely the most tedious aspect of this *Clash of the Titans* is that, for those familiar with Harryhausen's epic, sitting through this bombastic mess amounts to little more than a weird compare-and-contrast exercise with the original film. It feels less like a fantasy adventure and more like an algebra exam.

STUART F. ANDREWS

BLOOMIN' 'ELL

THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS (BLU-RAY)

Starring Douglas Scott, Joely Richardson and Jason Priestley
Directed by Nick Copin
Written by Patrick Harbinson, Richard Mewes and John Wyndham
Power

When it comes to horror and sci-fi, the British do three things astoundingly well: Hammer Horror, *Doctor Who* and films about those pesky carnivorous plants known as triffids.

The Day of the Triffids is a post-apocalyptic story (originally written by John Wyndham in 1951) about how nearly all of Earth's inhabitants are simultaneously blinded by a dazzling meteor shower, only to be preyed upon by a malicious species of man-eating, intelligent plant life.



Wyndham's famous tale was made into a feature film in 1962, appeared as a radio series for the BBC seven times and was developed into a critically acclaimed TV miniseries in 1981. For this new version, writer Patrick Harbinson (TV's *24* and *Millennium*) has tweaked the storyline a bit, setting it in contemporary London where the triffids are bio-engineered plants that have saved humanity from the threat of global warming by becoming a source of clean-burning oil. After an unusual display of solar flares renders most of the population sightless, the triffids escape their refinery prisons and attack the helpless human smorgasbord stumbling all around them. The series follows a group of sighted survivors who have banded together to fight the sentient shrubs, only to be preyed upon by other survivors eager to use the chaos to propel their own greedy motives.



Green Hell: Plant life attacks in *The Day of the Triffids*

may just save the fair-to-middlin' effort that is *Freeway Killer* from being unjustly lumped in with so many inferior serial killer films from the last five years or so.

While not devoid of problems – both the script and an obviously low budget keep the film from feeling as authentically “period” as it aspires to – this workmanlike effort succeeds largely on Scott Anthony Leet’s performance as Bonin. It’s a long-standing truism that most serial killer roles require an actor to bring the crazy but resolutely shun the krazzy-zoo, and Leet pulls it off admirably with his odd brand of pasty, sweaty, grinning/gnawing panache. It’s all the more remarkable that Bonin is presented in such a thoroughly unsympathetic fashion, given that the most sadistic aspects of his crimes are barely alluded to. We witness multiple murders but no rapes, and there’s scarcely any hint of the horrific torture to which most of Bonin’s real-life victims were subjected.



The refusal to sensationalize a true serial murder case may be seen as admirable up to a certain point, but here it ultimately accents the film’s curious squeamishness over addressing Bonin’s homosexuality, a perfectly relevant plot point that is barely hinted at. The supporting players – including the wonderful Michael Rooker (*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*), who appears to have been thrown into the mix purely for marquee value – are impressive, but Leet’s remarkable portrayal is the main attraction here.

Well, that and the minor miracle that Lommel and Fisher didn’t get their mouldy mitts on this story first

JOHN W. BOWEN

SHOW ‘EM YOU’RE A TIGER

TONY

Starring Peter Ferdinando, Ricky Glover and Neil Maskell
Written and directed by Gerard Johnson
Reviewer

Tony (Peter Ferdinando) is a bit of an oddball: nervous, socially awkward, unhealthy, sexually repressed – and what do you know, he’s also a serial killer. This short, low-budget British feature, which focuses on an average week in Tony’s utterly detached and mundane life, is vaguely reminiscent of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, although Tony doesn’t manage to achieve the depth of its predecessor.

The violence – and gore – is very understated, though this actually works well, since it’s contrasted with the explicit psychological violence that Tony encounters every day as the local weirdo in his poor London housing estate, where he’s berated, rejected, mocked and humiliated by almost everyone he meets. The overriding sense is of a man completely disconnected from other people. Tony just doesn’t fit in with anyone – the local junkies, the people in the pub, the patrons of his favourite gay bar, a random prostitute – and yet his killings are motivated by a psychotic pragmatism, rather than anger. The moment of purest insight into his character comes when a licensing officer attempts to take away his TV, and Tony strangles him with an electrical cord (a reference to *Henry*?). For him, it seems, killing is just a practical way of dealing with people who scare him, usually because they threaten, in one way or another, the comparatively stable existence he’s built for himself, alone.



LAST CHANCE LANCE SOFT-SERVE SADISM

FREEWAY KILLER

Starring Scott Anthony Leet, Dusty Sorg and Michael Rooker
Directed by John Markowski
Written by David Burke
Image

Here are three things you should know about William Bonin. One, he was a serial killer who, with the help of several young accomplices, raped and killed no less than 21 young men and teenage boys in California, between 1979 and 1980, and remains suspected of fifteen more murders. Two, in 1996, he became the first person executed by lethal injection in California. Three, as of this writing, none of the usual Z-movie suspects – including Uli Lommel and the dreaded Chris Fisher – have gotten around to making a shitty film about him. That last factoid

ABBREVIATED TERRORS

SHORT FILMS REVIEWED

As the movie ends, the sight of Tony wandering around the streets of London casually dropping plastic bags of flesh into the river evokes, if not pure horror, an overwhelming sense of isolation and loneliness – which is perhaps even more terrifying. *Tony* is an interesting movie, but its lack of a strong plot means that it falls a bit flat, which is a shame, because for a largely silent protagonist with no social skills, Tony is an oddly compelling character.

CLAIRE HORNSELL

BIG HAIRY DEAL

THE REAL WOLFMAN

Written by Larone K. Miller
History Channel

We can all agree on who was the most famous cinematic werewolf. (Taylor Lautner, right kids? Hal!) But many questions remain about history's most famous "real" werewolf. The so-called "Beast of Gévaudan" terrorized rural 18th-century France, mauling more than 100 peasants (mostly women and children) to death before, as the legend goes, being shot and killed by a silver bullet.

In many ways, the Beast of Gévaudan is to werewolf mythology what Vlad is to vamps. (See *Brotherhood of the Wolf* for one modern interpretation of the legend.) And so fans of the fictional *Juup-garou* may find themselves curious about the validity of the story. Enter the History Channel, producers of *Ancient Aliens* and *MonsterQuest*. They sent two American guys to the scene of the crimes to

investigate. George Deuchar is a criminal profiler who suspects a serial killer was responsible. Cryptozoologist Ken Gerhardt believes it must be an animal, but is hoping to find proof of a real werewolf. They both act like idiots as they traipse around France meeting historians, animal trainers, church officials and the like, examining documents and conducting experiments. I'm not saying these men are idiots, but the format of this kind of TV show sets them up to ask stupid questions and engage in awkwardly scripted conflicts, all intercut with blurry werewolf recreations.

Alright, so there is certainly some neat info here: how full moons make people and animals go loco, how therians go loco when filmed ("Turn that flashlight off! It's interfering with my shape-shifting!") and why the Catholic church may have had a vested interest in convincing locals they were loco. The forensic tests, such as which animal jaws can crush through a spine and thus decapitate humans, or how accurate a silver bullet actually shoots, are fun in a poor-man's CSI kind of way. But most of this research territory is well-trodden. And their conclusion? Well, not to spoil it for you, but it's pretty laughable.

The DVD is just the 90-minute *Real Wolfman* show with no extras, which is fine because I don't think I could take any more of the History Channel's brand of mythbusting.

LISA LADOUCEUR

CIRCLING THE DRAIN

DANTE'S INFERNO: AN ANIMATED EPIC

Starring Graham McTavish, Vanessa Branch and Steve Blum
Directed by Mike Disa
Written by Brandon Auman
Starz

The latest animated video game cash grab tie-in features, oddly, classic literature's Dante – but not the one you know. Released alongside the eagerly anticipated console game it is based upon (see *AMF98*), *Dante's Inferno: An Animated Epic* is a direct-to-DVD feature-length adaptation of the gory



CHEERLEADERS

cheerleaders.com
11:00 mins.

Even J.J. Abrams' receptionist is talented. It turns out, Peter Podgursky, currently paying the bills as the front office guy at *Bad Robot* (the company owned by Abrams, *Twilight*, *Lost* and the *Star Trek* reboot), is a graduate of USC's film program, and *Cheerleaders* is his thesis film. The horror-comedy features Penny and Devon, two goth outcasts locked in an archetypal high school battle with the cheerleaders and football team. Penny brings her grandfather's Greek urn to show-and-tell one day and one of the jocks dumps the ancient, slimy contents on Devon, which gives him supernatural control of the cheerleaders. Now, it's pay-back time, and only Penny stands in Devon's way. A little rough technically, but still more entertaining than 90 percent of the competition.

JASON LAPEYRE



NIGHT OF THE HELL HAMSTERS

nightofthehellhamsters.com
15:50 mins.

Hamsters: they sure look cute, but they're really just fuzzballs with razor-sharp teeth. This twisted short from the UK follows a babysitter and her boyfriend who unwittingly conjure up demonic hamsters via a homemade Ouija board. Soon, blood and fury fly as the couple tries to fend off the creatures with everything from a soursop

to a cricket bat. Writer/director Paul Campion, who honed his visual effects talents working on *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *Snitch*, packs more gore and cool, campy special FX into *Night of the Hell Hamsters* than most Hollywood horror fare. Until you see a charred, floating hamster with glowing red eyes say, "Your boyfriend sucks cocks in hell!" you ain't seen nuthin'!

LAST CHANCE LANCE

2:22

222short.com
9:00 mins.

A woman wakes up screaming, her body racked by pain. She stumbles to the bathroom, trying to make sense of the horrible agony. It's difficult to reveal much of 2:22's plot – which unfolds in flashbacks – without giving away the reason for her distress, but most of the action revolves around a chance meeting with a handsome stranger at a nightclub. Respect has to be given to lead Tara Lightfoot for putting herself out there with her performance, but on the whole, the film is disappointing. The flashbacks are cliché and Lightfoot's character is as underdeveloped as the generic story. The unwarranted nudity suggests that even the filmmakers' lacked confidence in their short's ability to keep an audience watching without some titillation.

JASON LAPEYRE



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Dante's Inferno: A hellish infernal smackdown.

EA/Visceral button-masher. The game takes extended liberties with Dante Alighieri's 14th-century poem, morphing our hero into a scythe-wielding soldier of the Third Crusade, and this project from EA and Film Roman (the team behind *Dead Space: Downfall*) continues on the same interpretive thread that Johnathan Knight took up when developing the script for the game.

In this *Inferno*, Dante (voiced by Graham McTavish; *Prison Break*) doesn't only journey through hell, he obliterates everything that stands in the way of finding his beloved Beatrice (Vanessa Branch; *Pirates of the Caribbean*), who is trapped in the clutches of Lucifer (Steve Blum; *Batman: Arkham Asylum*). Watching Dante travel through nine circles, slaying one gatekeeper after another, quickly becomes a tediously predictable smack-down. And salvation never comes.



The project is actually a collaboration between six different animation studios, with each studio being responsible for its own segment. Unfortunately the style changes are only noticeable in Dante's overall appearance, Virgil's outfit and the size of Beatrice's expensive (always naked) boots. This makes it more of a distraction than a cool gimmick and, with the plot already hurtling, the audience is bound to lose interest after the second or third circle. Repetitive and inconsistent, you can bet *Dante's Inferno* was rushed to meet a video game release date.

JESSA SOBICZUK

HANNAH: 1. WARRIORS: 0

MONSTER WARRIORS

Starring Jared Keeso, Mandy Butcher and Graeme Lynch
Created by Wilson Coneybeare
Directed by Wilson Coneybeare, Mandy Butcher, Graeme Lynch et al.
Written by Wilson Coneybeare, Hugh Hardy, Steve Westren, et al.
Anchor Bay

[It's time to welcome back Hannah, our intrepid ten-year-old critic.]

Monster Warriors is a television show for kids. It's about four kids that destroy monsters. Except the team doesn't kill the monsters, they just momentarily paralyze them. It's not very exciting.

The pros of the show are... actually, there are no pros. This is a terrible show! A great kids' monster show is *Mad Monster Party*. That show has great animation, the characters have real emotions and, to be honest, it is spooky. Very unlike *Monster Warriors*.

The cons of *Monster Warriors*: the monsters are horribly animated—it looks like a five-year-old did the animation. The actors' expressions are so unrealistic! After they defeat a monster, they don't even realize how much they helped their community. They don't congratulate each other or celebrate. When they are getting dressed to paralyze a monster, one girl puts on earrings! Doesn't she know that she doesn't have time for that? And why would you need to look pretty when you are temporarily killing a monster? Some of the sets in the show are filmed on a stage, but they don't even try to make it look real.

This crazy man creates all the monsters that the monster warriors tackle. He watches the

monster warriors when they are fighting each monster. Creep.

The other thing I find strange about this show is that the warriors always have to go to their headquarters to have meetings, even though they're usually right beside the place where the monsters are found. They should be smart enough to just have a brief meeting in their car. What if the monsters started killing people while they had a meeting? What can I say? This show is horrible! I would not recommend it to anybody, unless you want to be bored out of your mind.

HANNAH GARCÉS-SLOANE

...AND BEHOLD!


LO

Starring Jeremiah Birkett, Sarah Louise and Ward Roberts
Written and directed by Travis Betz
Synchrozed

A lack of money can often be a source of inspiration and innovation for indie filmmakers. Enter writer/director Travis Betz, the latest fledgling artist to attempt to use financial constraints to his advantage, with *Lo*, a horror-comedy take on the Faust myth.


Justin (Ward Roberts) draws an elaborate pentagram on the floor of his darkened apartment and carries out a ritual he hopes will help reclaim his girlfriend, April, from hell. After successfully summoning the demon *Lo* (Jeremiah Birkett),

Justin hopes to convince the hellion to use whatever clout he might possess to help him locate and rescue April. *Lo*, played as both funny and menacing by Jeremiah Birkett, traces the history of Justin and April's relationship through live theatre-style flashbacks, cleverly staged just outside the pentagram.



Lo toys with Justin, attempting to lure him outside the safety of the sacred symbol, while he pushes him to figure out his girlfriend's dark secret. Turns out April isn't just lost, she's completely psychotic—giving neither Justin nor the audience any reason to like her.

That's the script's first fatal mistake; if we can't empathize with Justin's quest, why would we want to watch him pursue it? Additionally, since the interaction between Justin and *Lo* makes up the backbone of the story, it puts the onus of the film's success entirely on the script and the acting—and that's where the rest of it falls apart.



Birkett seems to genuinely be having fun playing the demon, performing under two inches of makeup that make him look like a grifter version of one of the monsters from *The Descent*. It's just that Betz can't handle the storytelling. The goofball tone of Justin and *Lo*'s give-and-



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LAST RITES

OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE GETS THE BILL

AYE, THERE'S THE 'BUB!

RAVAGE THE SCREAM QUEEN

Bill Zebub Productions

I wasn't sure what my focus would be for the 100th issue — Lance Henriksen or Jed Rowen? Brain Damage or The Asylum? Lesbian werewolves or killer dildos? Then I received a letter from writer/director Bill Zebub, assuring me that if I decided to feature three of his films, women would "fall from the sky and peck at me with soft lips and hard nipples." Deal sealed! *Ravage* follows two depraved friends who pose as independent filmmakers so that they can

lure women back to their house to rape, torture and kill, while recording the proceedings for their very own snuff film. Rife with fake blood, bondage babes and a shitload of recycled footage from Zebub's previous outings, this isn't recommended unless you're already into subpar torture porn.

BODY COUNT: 12

NAKED GIRLS: 19

PERVS OF A FEATHER...

BREAKING HER WILL

Bill Zebub Productions

If you were offended by the events described in the previous review, hold on to your pants — things are gonna get a whole lot sleazier. *Breaking Her Will* features a demented pervert who kidnaps a woman to be his sex slave. By slowly dehumanizing her through a series of prolonged rapes (accompanied by disturbing humiliation and horrific degradation), the deviant wears his subject down to the point where she willingly helps kidnap and abuse other

victims. Even though the sexual acts are softcore (no penetration or man-junk on display here), it's still quite disconcerting and uncomfortable to watch. But apparently there's a market for this kind of film, because there's a lot of sickos out there. I should know, I'm one of 'em!

BODY COUNT: 4

NAKED GIRLS: 15

SLICK WILLY

NIGHT OF THE PUMPKIN

Bill Zebub Productions

Maybe it was an act of God (or Satan), maybe the planets were in the right alignment or maybe it was simply an accident, but somehow Zebub finally got his directorial shit together. This fun, campy throwback to the gory slasher/Halloween fare of yesteryear sees a group of college students organizing a stalker party become prey for a monster with a bloodsoaked jack-o'-lantern head (hence the title). Yes, there are many of the usual no-budget shortcomings, but overall this movie marks a turning point for Zebub. It's got a coherent storyline check full of witty dialogues, rather than just an endless parade of naked women. Well done, Bill! I'd shake your hand if I weren't sure that I'd catch something horribly contagious.

BODY COUNT: 9

NAKED GIRLS: 4

take sequences mixes awkwardly with the failed attempts at horror. The proceedings feel more reminiscent of a filmed play than an actual movie. In the hands of a different filmmaker, the innovative structure and stagey flashbacks might have worked. But despite Birkett's highlight performance, *Lo* is amateurish and unable to rise above its meagre budget, proving the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

JASON LAPEYRE

RIPE INDEED

THE CARETAKER

Starring Jennifer Tilly, Judd Nelson and Kara Verrastro

Directed by Bryce Olson

Written by Jackie Olson

MVI Home Video

"He turned an ordinary fruit picker into a weapon of mass destruction!" exclaims a future victim of the killer's armament of choice in Bryce Olson's new slasher film *The Caretaker*. But if you're hoping for carnage, misery and suffering rendered with a sickening level of blood, best prepare yourself for a meagre harvest, as this killer custodian seems happy to muster only a gentle dose of brutality with his gardening tool of terror.

On the eve of the homecoming dance, which just happens to coincide with Halloween, three rowdy jocks and their dates detour their time to an abandoned house located in a grapefruit orchard, hoping to give the girls a good scare. As legend has it, the caretaker of the crops — driven psychotically jealous by workers moving in on his trophy wife — took a fruit picker to the whole lot of them and has been making the rounds ever since. Following page one of the horror movie handbook, the kids split up to explore the stored grounds and, predictably, get, well, picked off one by one as the fabled caretaker makes a predictable series of violent appearances.

Not surprisingly, *The Caretaker* plays out almost like a trailer version of itself, jumping through gaping plot holes and constantly cutting away, cheating the viewer of any real violence. The killing tool, a modified grapefruit-picking device, looks pretty damn brutal and seems, uh, ripe for a number of carnage configurations. Instead, though, the kills involve scenes of rolling grapefruits (I'm not kidding) and implied attacks, followed by shots of the victims looking like they were pawed by an agitated cat.

The characters are developed as much as any single word can stereotypically describe: "horny," "scared," "bitchy," "stupid," etc., and not even appearances by Jennifer Tilly as a cougar school teacher who shares a sexual history with the killer or aging rebel Judd Nelson as a forewarning father can prevent *The Caretaker* from leaving a sour taste in your mouth.

JAMES KING



LAST CHANCE LANCE



by Gregory William Mank

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BY Goblins GOBLINS Be Driven

DB
STUART F.
ANDREWS

NY REASONABLY COMPETENT HACK CAN DIRECT A BAD FILM; however, it takes a perverse level of genius to make a movie that once reigned at the very bottom of the worst 100 movies of all time list on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb.com). But such is the 1990 cult classic *Troll 2*, the in-name-only sequel to the 1986 horror fantasy *Troll*—and a film that has effectively usurped Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space* as one of the most lamentable genre films of all time. So why is *Troll 2* so deserving of these unfortunate accolades?

"As a bad movie, it fails in every film-making principle: bad script, bad writing, bad acting, horrible effects," explains Michael Stephenson, the child star of the film and director of *Best Worst Movie*, a documentary about the phenomenon of *Troll 2*'s exploding cult status. "And then you add a non-English-speaking Italian crew and place them in the middle of Utah and the result is a disaster. But it's an entertaining disaster."

The branchchild of Italian schlockmeister Claudio Fragasso (*Monster Dog*, *Zombie 4: After Death*), *Troll 2* stars Stephenson as Joshua, the youngest member of the Waits family, who, while vacationing in rural America, pass through the mysterious town of "Nilbog" (That's "goblin" spelled backwards), where they come face-to-face with a gang of tall-crazy hobgoblins (yes, despite the title, there are no actual trolls in the film). After near-endless inexplicably bizarre set pieces, utterly brutal dialogue ("You can't piss on hospitality!") and monster costumes that look as though they were plucked from the Halloween section of a dollar store, the goblins' nefarious plan is revealed: as strict "vegetarians," they aim to turn the Waits family into plants before they swallow them whole.

"I felt like we were making the next *Gremlins* or *Labyrinth*," admits Stephenson. "I had no point of reference. At the time, we all thought we were making a great horror film."

When *Troll 2* wrapped production, Stephenson assumed he'd get the chance to see it with his family at the local multiplex. But as time passed, it never hit theatres. Instead, it went straight to VHS and was then banished to late-night cable outlets.

"It was about a year later, on Christmas morning," explains Stephenson. "We're all gathered around the tree and I unwrapped this weird VHS tape. And I hear my mom, 'Michael! It's your movie! Let's watch it.' And all of us sat around and we pressed play and it wasn't long after that jaws dropped and I remember my dad saying, 'Oh Michael! This is a terrible movie!' I was still young at the time but I was old enough to realize that it wasn't *Labyrinth*. It wasn't *Gremlins*. That was a Christmas we'll never forget."

Fourteen years later, Stephenson was happily working in LA in the advertising industry, but he still couldn't shake the spectre of *Troll 2*.

"Up until that point, anything related to *Troll 2* I turned as far away from," he confesses.

"I mean, I hated baloney sandwiches. Every time I heard the name 'Joshua,' I just shuddered. But then I started getting MySpace messages from different fans around the country and they





would say, 'Are you Joshua Watts? Please say it is so!' And none of them knew about each other and they'd send me pictures of their *Troll 2* parties and it was clear they were sincerely having a great time with this movie. I thought, 'Why? How is this happening?' And then one morning I woke up and said, 'I am the star of the worst movie ever made!' And I had a smile on my face. It was like this rebirth I thought there's a story here and I quickly thought, 'Best Worst Movie!'

Stephenson quickly wrote up a blueprint for the documentary and, with the help of the film's rapidly growing fan base, put together a series of screenings in major cities to help bring the cast, crew and fans together. It was at the very first screening in New York that it

occurred to him that the lovable George Hardy, who played the father Michael Watts, would become the main focus of the doc. Currently working as a dentist in Alabama, *Troll 2* marked the beginning and end of Hardy's ill-fated acting career.

"We had gone to grab some dinner and were coming back to the theatre, and we were a block or so away and there was a line that wrapped all the way around the building. We didn't think it was for *Troll 2*," admits Stephenson. "We had no idea, and all of a sudden, people recognized George because he looks fairly the same. Fans went crazy and George's face just lit up. He was so excited to be there. I just sat back and thought, 'This is such a great contrast.' You know, Alabama dentist, first and last movie, and all of a sudden [he's] here in New York with people that were going crazy for him. I thought, 'This is the guy. This is the vehicle for the movie!'"

However, Hardy is just one of many unforgettable personalities who appear in the doc, not the least of whom is actor Don Packard, who played the creepy drugstore owner. He reveals that he was fresh out of a mental hospital when making *Troll 2* and has almost no memory of filming it.

"That's documentary gold!" says Stephenson. "He then decided to share how he felt about me at the time of the film and how he wanted to kill me, and I was just praying that my battery wouldn't die."

One of the documentary's most unsettling scenes is an encounter with the elusive Margo Prey, who plays the mother Diana Watts. Stephenson and Hardy travelled to her home only to find a reclusive woman clearly suffering from some sort of schizophrenia-like delusions.

"The first time we went to visit Margo, we didn't know why there was this big 'No trespassing!' sign out front," recalls Stephenson. "But when she opened the door, it felt like I jumped into a frozen lake. She came forth from this darkness in her house and I just thought, 'Wow!' Not only did I want to catch up and get an interview, but I really wanted her to understand what was happening with these screenings and realize that there are fans of hers, genuine fans that like her."

But perhaps it is the director himself, Claudio Fragasso, who is destined to be a fan favourite. He actually believes that *Troll 2* is celebrated as an important film, full of meaningful social commentary and an environmental subtext (hence the vegetarian gibberish). In one of the doc's most incredibly awkward moments, he confronts the actors at a post-screening Q&A in Austin, Texas, screaming at them from the crowd for mocking the movie, going so far as to call them "dogs!"

"I love him as a character," confesses Stephenson. "He's very passionate. And he made *Troll 2* the way he wanted to make it and I think that says a lot about somebody. As a director, the worst thing I think you can do is fail to entertain, and Claudio does not do that."

In the wake of *Troll 2*'s rebirth as a cult classic, and with a reported remake of the original *Troll* in the works, Fragasso intends to direct a sequel called *Troll 2 Part 2*.

"Well, as soon as Claudio saw what was happening with the fans, the very first thing in his mind was, 'Michael, we have to make a sequel! But this time we make it with a bigger budget and not shit effects,'" relates Stephenson. "I think that as far as it actually happening, part of me says I don't know if I'll get off the ground. The other part of me says if Claudio was able to make *Troll 2* in Utah and couldn't speak English and pulled it off, maybe he can get this off the ground. Whether it will work or not, my feeling is *Troll 2* worked because it was sincere and it wasn't intentionally trying to be that way. I mean, how could you create lightning in a bottle twice?"

The question most often asked of Stephenson, and the one he still hasn't come to terms with himself, is would he be willing to reprise his role as Joshua Watts?

"Oh man, that's such a hard question," he angushes, "because I've told myself that I cannot rest until George Hardy is in another movie. *Troll 2* was a fun time. Then there was the embarrassment of being in the worst movie ever made. But now, looking back, ironically, it's offered some of the greatest, most memorable experiences of my life."

Best Worst Movie is currently screening in select cities throughout North America. For more information, visit the film's website at bestworstmovie.com



That'll Leave A Mark: (top to bottom) Michael Stephenson, as Joshua, gets shined; *Troll 2* director Claudio Fragasso returns with cast members to the scene of the crime; George Hardy jokes with fans; (above left) Stephenson now; and (opposite) *T2* fans in homemade costumes

REISSUES



WE'RE A HAPPY FAMILY

GIRLY (1970)

Starring Vanessa Howard, Howard Trevor and Ursula Howells
Directed by Freddie Francis
Written by Brian Comport and Maile Mossie
Scorpion Releasing

"Nasty nanny is no good! Chop her up for firewood! When she's dead, boil her head, make it into

a film falling through the cracks! It's not entirely surprising that such an oddball, broadly satirical thriller as *Girly*—a.k.a. *Mummy, Nanny, Sonny and Girly*—failed to find a mainstream audience in 1970, especially given its lack of name actors. However, this was still Britain's golden era of horror cinema (albeit in its twilight years), which was also an incredibly fertile period for offbeat British comedies such as *Bedazzled* and *The Magic Christian*. Add the marquee value of Hammer stalwart Freddie Francis as director, plus a sexually charged, virtually unknown stunner and you've got a film that should at least have rated a footnote.



Based on a stage play titled *Happy Family*, this delightfully twisted concoction introduces us to a conspicuously fatherless clan of nursery rhyme-spouting upper-crust psychos who lure hapless and homeless people to their palatial estate for elaborate games that inevitably result in the guests being "sent to the angels." Although siblings Sonny (Howard Trevor) and *Girly* (Vanessa Howard) appear to be in their late teens or early twenties, both exist in a state of arrested development circa age ten, and gleefully toy with each new victim before dispatching them in darkly novel fashion. The deadly fun and frolic continues until the "kids" bring home another new friend—Michael Bryant, billed only as "New Friend"—who plays a few games of his own. Performances range from good to great, but the standout here is perpetually mini-skirted sexbomb Howard, who should have skyrocketed to major pin-up status but soon grew discouraged by

her stalled career and drifted out of the business.

Apparently when London's National Film Theatre presented a Francis retrospective a few

years ago, not a single print of *Girly* could be found. Even I'd pretty much forgotten all about this darkly funny, sexy gem until Scorpion's screener landed at the House of Horror. Although sadly fullscreen, the picture quality and sound are generally good, which is more than can be said for the extras; interviews with Francis and screenwriter Brian Comport are entertaining but suffer from very dodgy audio. No matter, I implore you, jump on this one as soon as you can.

JOHN W. BOWEN

FOR SLUDGE LOVERS ONLY

HONEYMOON OF HORROR (1964)

Starring Robert Parsons, Abbey Heller and Alexander Panas
Directed by Irwin Meyer
Written by Alexander Panas
Something Weird Video

The state of Florida generated some bizarre exploitation films in the '60s and '70s, the most head-spinning examples being *Two Thousand Maniacs!*, *Blood Freak*, *Flesh Feast* and *Death Curse of Tartu*. Irwin Meyer's *Honeymoon of Horror* isn't on par with those pictures in terms of its disconcerting capabilities, but it's still an amusingly hammy psycho-thriller with plenty of camp charm. The vacuous Lili (Abbey Heller) is an innocent young thing whose marriage to overripe French sculptor Emile (Robert Parsons) introduces her to a gaggle of artsy weirdos, all of whom seem intent on seeing her dead. The motive is simple: none of the nutty crew, which includes Emile's institutionalized brother (screenwriter Alexander Panas), blowy hanger-on Helene (Beverly Lane) and turbaned manservant Hajmir (Vincenzo Pelti, whose stony Hindi routine is straight out of a '30s serial), want to share Emile's incredible magnetism and talent—though with his fruity accent and Brycreamed 'do, it's hard to understand the hold he has on them. Maybe they're all under-achievers.

As suspense goes, director Meyer (later a prolific TV producer) fires blanks at every turn, so the film's true selling point is its unintentional humor. Performances range from narcotized (Heller) to certifiably goony (Pelti), while Panas' sudsy dialogue is about ten shades of purple. Gorehounds expecting Herschell Gordon Lewis-style pro-splatter should know that there's a smattering of blood in the final third of the film but, for the most part, *Honeymoon of Horror* is fairly anemic. But as Frank Henenlotter observes in his liner notes, the movie makes an agreeably knuckleheaded booklet to either kill-for-your-art horror sludge such as *Color Me Blood Red* and *Scream Baby*



Scream (not to mention *Track of the Vampire* and *Playgirl KWee*).

Emile's garish home is the real-life abode of sculptor and social gadfly Baron Sepy Debronn, who undoubtedly also provided some of the gilded artwork (the Baron later allowed Gerard Damiano to shoot *Deep Throat* there). This DVD-R release is rounded out with trailers for other Dore-lensed exploitation titles from SWV's vast library, including *Orgy of the Golden Nudes* (an alternate version of *Honeymoon* with grubby nude inserts), as well as *String of Death*, *Moonshiner's Woman* and *The Grotesome Twosome*.

PAUL GAITA

TWINSANE IN THE MEMBRANE

GOODBYE GEMINI (1970)

Starring Judy Geeson, Martin Potter and Alexis Kanner
Directed by Alan Gibson
Written by Edmund Ward
Scorpion Releasing

The alternate title for *Goodbye Gemini* is *Twinsanity*, which could also function as a one-word review. Based on the novel Ask Agamemnon by Jenni Hall, *Goodbye Gemini* tells the tale of Jacki (Judy Geeson) and Julian (Martin Potter), a pair of precocious, blonde and blue-eyed twin siblings returning from South America to a London home owned by their absentee father. Secretive and unusually close, the brother and sister seem most comfortable conversing with Agamemnon, a stuffed doll carried around by Jacki. Once settled into their new digs, though, they immerse themselves in the shady underbelly of London's nightlife.

But even the drugged-out hipsters with whom they frolic notice something is amiss about these two: besides dressing alike, the incestuous overtones of their relationship are obvious to the other partygoers. Upon meeting Cive (Alexis Kanner), a ringleader of sorts who welcomes them into his inner circle with sinister intentions, Julian is raped by two transvestites as Cive takes photos. A degenerate gambler, Cive tries to use the pictures as blackmail to repay a debt, but things don't play out to his expectations. Instead, Julian takes Jacki into helping him dole out Cive's just desserts, which the knife-wielding twins serve up in a rather ritualistic manner, all while covered in long sheets. It is definitely one of the film's most memorable scenes.

Despite the craziness, brutality and murder, *Goodbye Gemini* plays out as a slow, character-driven piece that is more psychological thriller than horror. Relying on a few instances of disturbing imagery and stylized cinematography, it scores several notches above Gibson's directorial outings for Hammer (*Dracula A.D. 1972* and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*—two of the worst entries in that particular series). Plus, the music

refreshingly sidesteps the usual James Bernard-style of orchestral scoring so prevalent in British thrillers of that era in favour of contemporary soul and funk numbers, including "Tell the World We're Not In," an infectious title track by The Peddlers.

Scorpion's release features an audio commentary by Judy Geeson and producer Peter Snell, who three years later, would produce *The Wicker Man* (1973) and is currently in post-production on *The Wicker Tree*. Diddy enough, as you can see by reading the previous review of *Gravy*, this isn't the only 1970 British thriller about insane child-like siblings to be released by Scorpion. Who knew?

ERIC VELETTE

STONE COLD STABBIN'

KNIFE OF ICE (1972)

Starring Carroll Baker, Alan Scott and George Rigaud
Directed by Umberto Lenzi
Written by Luis E. de Blain and Umberto Lenzi
MVD Visual/Wham! USA

Fans of Italo-genre workhorse Umberto Lenzi may come to *Knife of Ice*, his third giallo with sexy American ex-pat Carroll Baker, expecting the same abundance of sesso e violenza as *Orgasmo* (1969) and *Paranoia* (1970), but the end result hews a lot closer to Hammer's early '60s *Psycho* carbons such as *Scream of Fear*. Taking his cues from Robert Siodmak's *The Spiral Staircase*, Lenzi gives Baker a chance to do more than just look scared in various states of undress as Martha Caldwell, a sweet young girl left mute after witnessing her parents' death, who's now living an idyllic existence with her uncle Ralph (George Rigaud) in rural

France. The arrival of cousin Jenny (wily/lovely Ida Galli, billed as "Evelyn Stewart") throws her life into turmoil, as a psychopath—and a Satan-worshipping one to boot—has also come to town and begins claiming those closest to Martha, starting with Jenny. Is the killer the local hippie? Sinister chauffeur Marcos (Eduardo Fajardo)? Or bland, sorta love interest Dr. Laurent (Alan Scott)?

The answer is steeped in the outta-left-field psychology so typical of giallo, which should please devotees of the form. And the events leading up to it unfold with some suspenseful pacing and atmosphere, most notably in an early scene where Martha and Jenny are stalked on a foggy street while stranded in a parked car. What's lacking, as mentioned, is the level of sleaze and gore that typified the giallo in the early '70s; the murders are delivered with a paucity of blood, and aside from a few seconds of Stewart in a nightgown, *Knife* is a particularly mild-mannered entry (though there are two moments of animal death, and some beautiful footage).

That, and the cliché-and-red-herring-heavy script by Luis de Blain and Lenzi are what separates this picture from the better giallo, including Lenzi's own *Seven Blood-Stained Orchids* (1972) and *EyeBall* (1975). However, if one wants to introduce the genre to a newcomer (or an overly squeamish viewing companion), *Knife of Ice* might be the place to start. Micro-label Wham! USA's DVD is letterboxed, and makes excellent use of Marcello Giombini's woozy score in its menus and slideshow of stills.

PAUL GAITA



Goodbye Gemini: And hello brutal murder!



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DARIO

by JASON FICHTENSKY

DVD HAS BEEN VERY KIND TO HORROR CONNOISSEURS, WITH ONCE HARD-TO-FIND FAN FAVORITES POPPING UP IN SPECIAL EDITION/WIDESCREEN/UNCUT VERSIONS. But as the years have gone by, the rights to many of these popular titles have bounced around to various companies, which have added new extras, redesigned packaging and offered fresh transfers, hoping to entice fans to double and sometimes triple up.

UK company Arrow Video just re-released a triple-header of Dario Argento films – *The Card Player*, *The Stendhal Syndrome* and *Opera* (a.k.a. *Terror at the Opera*) – in hopes you'll make even more room on your DVD shelf. The good news is that Arrow certainly has horror lovers' best interests at heart, going so far as to solicit advice for their releases from fans through the forums at cult-films.com. The films have been repackaged with case designs that emulate '80s VHS box art (check out more of Rick Melton's painted images at stunninglyawesome.com); a reversible cover (with the original poster art on the other side); a double-sided poster of the artwork; and a booklet that includes an informative essay about each film by Profondo Argento author Alan Jones.

Although these releases are Region 0, allowing them to be played on any computer, they still utilize the European PAL video format, so you'll need a player that can convert them to the North American NTSC (it's easy to find these small brand players at most electronics stores these days). But are Arrow's re-releases worth it?

The Stendhal Syndrome (1996) re-imagined the Hitchcockian thriller and introduced audiences to the Stendhal Syndrome, a psychological condition that causes its sufferer to become overwhelmed when exposed to works of art. Argento enlisted his daughter Asia to play Anna Manni, a policewoman plagued by amnesia and hallucinations brought on by the syndrome, who is stalked and abducted by a sadistic serial killer. The disc includes a trailer gallery of eighteen Argento films, but that's about it for extras. Even the abysmal 1998 pan-and-scan Troma release included interviews with Dario and visual effects artist

Sergio Stivaletti (discussing the first use of CGI effects in an Italian film). The saving grace here is the film itself. Presented uncut and in its original aspect ratio, this disc offers both the English-dubbed version and – for the first time – the Italian-language release with English subtitles.

The Card Player (2004) is a modern-day police procedural with less stylistic flair than a traditional Argento giallo. Italian detective Anna Mari (Stefania Rocca) teams up with British detective John Brennan (Liam Cunningham) to flush out a serial killer who uses an Internet chat room to goad police into playing video poker for the lives of his victims. This release offers the Argento trailers, as well as a promo and making-of documentary, presumably from the film's press materials. The previous North American disc already include all of these, plus a commentary by Alan Jones and additional documentaries. Again, the only reason to add this to your collection is the Italian audio dub of the film. But this is where Arrow stumbles; due to a manufacturing oversight, the English subtitles were omitted from the original disc pressings. Thwack! But fear not, the company is offering replacement discs (email returndis@arrowfilms.co.uk for details).

Arrow redeems itself with the two-disc *Terror at the Opera* (1957). Argento's manic giallo that mixes opera with heavy metal, and turns its heroine, Betty (Cristina Marsilichi), into a reluctant voyager for a deranged serial killer. Among the sparse extras are the "Top Gore Reel" and featurettes we've seen before in the Region 1 version. But again, Arrow includes the original Italian audio (this time the subtitles are there) and the original Cannes dub of the film, which features an effeminate British voice for Inspector Santini (Urbano Barberini) that was quickly re-dubbed with a harder American accent when snickers were heard throughout the audience at the festival screening. On the second disc, Arrow has included a recreation of a shorter proposed American re-edit of the film.

So, fellow DVD geeks, if you want to marvel at these new extras, finally see the films subtitled or need some top-notch transfers in your collection, Arrow's Argentos are worth the upgrade.



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GIVE 'EM SHELL!

GAMERA (1965)

Starring Eiji Funakoshi, Yoshio Uchida and Harumi Kintachi
Written and directed by Hisao Takahashi
Shout! Factory

It's said that Masaichi Nagata, head of Japan's Daiei Studios, first got the idea for a giant marauding turtle monster movie while dreaming one night – no doubt after a *Godzilla* marathon and too much leftover pizza (or the Japanese substitute). An obvious knock-off of Toho Studio's premiere *Kaiju* franchise, which was already five installments deep when Nagata ordered a script based on his vision, *Gamera's* fearsome emergence in 1965 nevertheless proved that Tokyo Harbour was big enough for at least two city-smashing titans.

Still, *Godzilla* has remained the favourite over the years. Japan's original King of the Monsters even got his due respect on DVD first, in 2006, when Sony released *Gojira*, a fully restored foreign-language version that properly exposed the depth of the original's stark nuclear annihilation allegory. Now, however, the hero-in-a-wholeshell underdog is ready for his own resurgence with the first North American release of the subtitled, original cut of *Gamera*.

Though *Gojira* shows that *Godzilla* began his career with a more serious edge, *Gamera* downplays the horrific aspects of its premise. Like his reptilian rival, *Gamera* arises in the wake of a nuclear blast, but his smash-happy sightseeing tour, which includes a lighthouse (*The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* anyone?), is only due to his energy-eating turtlesaurus' hunger. *Gamera* not only focuses most of his fury on inanimate objects, he's also revealed to be a kind-hearted "friend to all children" that saves the life of hapless Toshio (Yoshio Uchida). If *Godzilla* represented the unleashed destructive power of the A-bomb, then *Gamera* seems to counter-argue that atomic weapons can also be a protective force, safeguarding a country's future from outside peril.

This may be giving *Gamera* too much credit, though, as the original eight-film franchise isn't

much more than a juvenile goof on Toho's films. While it took the *Godzilla* series several years to drift toward rubber-suited pro-wrestling matches, *Gamera* dabbled in kiddie-friendly camp early on. Toshio, who believes *Gamera* is the incarnation of a pet turtle he was forced to give up, dominates the last half of the picture, loudly protesting that *Gamera* doesn't mean to be bad, even as stock footage army artillery bombards the creature to stop him from pulverizing more buildings.

In addition to sympathizing with the turtle-obsessed Toshio, young viewers surely would have been impressed with *Gamera's* production design. As a resurrected giant prehistoric tortoise, *Gamera* is actually pretty fearsome. What he lacks in girth he makes up for in expressiveness, with large eyes and even bigger fangs. He even boasts a new power intended to trump *Godzilla's* impressive strength and atomic breath – withdrawing into his shell, *Gamera* can spin himself into the air and shoot across the sky like a UFO.

Incorporating model work and optical printing, the special effects are not great, but they're quite comparable to Toho's best work, with intricate cityscapes, power plants and military facilities just waiting to be crushed under the foot of a turtle-suited sturman. The highlight of the film is *Gamera's* arrival in downtown Tokyo to rip off roofs, knock down the Tokyo Tower and scare off dancing teenagers that are initially too busy rocking out to worry about deadly giant monster attacks.

While the original Japanese version isn't a revelation for those familiar with the more common budget DVD release (dubbed by American producer Sandy Frank in the 1980s), Shout! Factory has given this turtle a much-needed new coat of wax. Its *Gamera* DVD features a sharply remastered anamorphic transfer in the original aspect ratio, and includes a variety of extras, including a twenty-minute Japanese documentary on the character's genesis.

Godzilla may have had a head start as Japan's *Kaiju* movie of choice, but *Gamera's* slow and steady progress with this new DVD should at least keep him in the race.

PAUL CORUPE



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SPIDEY-SENSELESS

by John W. Bowen

Subgenre mash-ups are nothing new in horror. You got your devil-worshipping redneck car-chase caper (*Race with the Devil*); you got your desert cannibal survivalist socio-political allegory (*The Hills Have Eyes*); you got your gory, feminist-enraging slasher film-as-character study (*Maniac*); you got your zombie comedy (too many and too tedious to name); you got your underwater Nazi zombies (*Shock Waves* and more — seriously!) and you got whatever the fuck your own personal take is on any given Troma film. And buried somewhere far beneath all of these, you got your 1975 über-cheeze, el cheapo hilibilly horror love poem to 1950s giant bug movies, hereafter known as *The Giant Spider Invasion*.

"Yet so dumb ya wouldn't know rabbit turds from Rice Krispies," goes the film's most memorable line, courtesy of beady-eyed redneck swine Dan Kester (Robert Easton). Though it may also go a long way toward explaining what the screenwriters truly thought of their target audience: Dan spends about half of his screen time in stained long johns and a back brace, berating his boozehound wife, Ev (Leslie Parrish, who at one point zings the abusive asshole with, "Sometimes the only way I know you're alive is when I hear you flush the toilet!").

The set-up: Meteorite crashes to Earth on Dan's farm just outside of a Wisconsin hick town, releases multiple geodes, which in turn release multiple tarantulas, several of which grow well past standard-issue size (one ultimately grows to resemble a Volkswagen covered in brown fur-fur with giant, flailing brown pipe cleaners sticking out of its sides and two glowing red eyes). The only hope for the denizens of Shiftuck, Wisconsin lies with scientists Dr. Vance (TV and B-movie veteran Steve Brodke) and Dr. Langer (Barbara Hale of *Perry Mason* fame), plus some good old-fashioned police work from the local sheriff (Yep, that'd be



the perpetually loveable, rotund Alan Hale from *Gilligan's Island*, whose first line in the film is "Hi, little buddy!") Of course, the atomic honey-moon was long over by 1975 — most folks were willing to forego the miracles and conveniences of nuclear science, all in the name of not gettin' blowed up real good — but true to *GS*'s '50s roots, the good doctors Langer and Vance soon realize atomic fuckery is the only way to squash this pesky arachnid, and appropriate steps are taken.

Director Bill Rebane, whose dubious credits also include *Invasion from Inner Earth* (1974), *The Alpha Incident* (1978) and *The Capture of Bigfoot* (1979), is no stranger to alienatedos of schlock horror, and yet he could scarcely be described as a hard-luck case along the lines of Ed Wood or Don Dohler. By the early 1970s, the Estonian-born, German-and-American-bred Rebane had enjoyed considerable success as a producer and executive with various independent film companies in both North America and Europe, and in 2002 made an unsuccessful run for governor of Wisconsin. Perhaps his political ambitions were karmically doomed, what with having turned down Ronald Reagan for a role in the 1963 sci-fi film *Terror at Halfday* on the grounds the Gipper

was a has-been. (The film was later completed by Herschell Gordon Lewis and retitled *Monster a-Go-Go*.)

A bit of rudimentary Googling will reveal to the curious that Rebane himself has serious misgivings about *GS*, referring to it as "Giant Spider Disaster" and recalling that the special effects supervisor was in fact falling-on-ass drunk during most of the shoot. But that's hardly a deterrent, is it, my malodorous minions? Hell, the sheer novelty of a heavily '50s-influenced movie from the '70s — hence enriched with profanity, a bit of gore and even the odd tit — is more than enough incentive to cram this one into the player for as long as the Mary Jane holds out, so I suggest you get on it.

Of course, I would be remiss (and possibly fired) if I didn't close out this column with a hearty congratto to Rodrigo, Dave and the entire Rue Crew — past, present and future — on this, our 100th issue. Hard to believe I first met ol' Rod when he was just a crazy kid with a dream; I'm proud to have made him what he is today. As for the rest of you, the party's starting, so get the hell out of my basement and don't forget to pick up your complimentary hot towel, commemorative Rue Morgue Snuggles™ and bat-scented air freshener. ♥

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BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

Comic book movie tie-ins are almost as old as the medium itself, but they have definitely become an industry staple over the last fifteen years. Traditionally, most movie comics have been mere adaptations of the films, but these days it's more common to use these publications to further the movie's plot, either through sequels, prequels or side stories.

Horror films in particular have found a second home on the four-colour page, with countless printed spinoffs ranging from the popular *Alien* to the more obscure *Witchfinder General*. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of George A. Romero's third *Dead* movie, Arrow Films follows suit with the exclusive *Day of the Dead: Desertion* comic, bundled with its UK Blu-ray release. (North American readers take heart! As reported in *AM99*, the disc is region-free.)

"The project started with [co-writer] Barry Keating," explains writer Stefan Hutchinson. "He and I had been talking about working on a project for some time, and he had approached Arrow Films about producing something for their *Day of the Dead* 25th anniversary release. Being that we're both huge fans of Romero's work, this seemed like the ideal thing to work on together."

Hutchinson is certainly not a stranger to movie-licensed comics, having worked on several *Halloween* projects in the past. However, this is his first time working on a comic that is being released outside of the mass market. Did that affect the writing itself?

"Definitely," says Hutchinson. "As the story is coming with the film itself, there's less need to remind readers of the minutiae of the universe."

For those who haven't seen the film,

the majority of the action takes place in an isolated military bunker, seemingly safe from the world outside, which is now completely overrun with zombies. With attempts to exterminate the undead becoming increasingly futile, a small

group of scientists believe they need to train and control the undead for co-existence to be possible. To this end, they attempt to housebreak "Bub," a zombie with an apparent army background.

Bub is easily the best thing in the movie, and a clear choice for the main subject of the comic. *Desertion* sees Bub in his pre-zombie days, having quit his military post to safeguard his family from the horrendous infestation.

"Well, he's oddly enough the most human character in the film in many ways," notes Hutchinson. "We draw on those themes and show the story of a man who has deserted his military role to care for his family – to save the individuals and not the many. That's a decision of heart, a human decision. The unfortunate counterpart to that is the oppressiveness in the film, so our story comes from those two ideas colliding."

That oppressiveness – combined with the lack of sympathetic human characters – has led some to dismiss *Day of the Dead*. And while the film was once considered Romero's weakest entry (until 2007's *Diary of the Dead* came along, that is), it has still amassed many fans over the years.

Hutchinson says, "Well, *Night* has always been my personal favourite but *Day* comes in second. While it may lack the epic scope of *Dawn*, its immediate predecessor, it still moves all of Romero's themes forward. He started with the family, moved to society in the second film and here, in the third, he addresses the government. It's the perfect ending to a trilogy. It's a brutal, nihilistic film, and we carried that tone through to the comic book."

Hutchinson was keen to observe Romero's social commentary, including a new subplot about



Day of the Dead: Desertion tells the back story of Bub and his family

the fate of Bub's son at the hands of human survivalists, brutally demonstrating that people can be even more inhuman than the zombies themselves.

"If anything, I wanted this also to be a coda to the original trilogy in terms of theme, which is one of the reasons that the first page evokes all three films. I think it's very important when extending a story from something that already exists that you try to capture the mood and feel of the source material. Most tie-ins capture narrative elements, but really, if that's all you do, you're insulting your readers and the films you're supposed to be paying tribute to."

The *Day of the Dead* 25th Anniversary Blu-ray with exclusive comic is now available. North Americans can purchase it through amazon.co.uk



Vertigo launches *American Vampire* with style and, thanks to the presence of Stephen King, much fanfare. Issue one is broken up into two stories; the first takes place in 1925 and introduces Pearl Jones, an aspiring actress in Hollywood who gets more than she bargained for when she attends a swanky party hosted by a big-shot producer. The second story, written by King, takes place in 1880 during an attempted escape by a notorious freshly captured bank robber named Skinner Sweet. The connection between the two tales is merely hinted at (take another glance at the comic's title for a clue) but it's obvious there's a lot more to be revealed. Rafael Albuquerque's art is excellent in both stories, and he does a great job of giving each tale a different look and feel. A solid start to what will hopefully be a landmark series.



Now this is more like it. A few months back I reviewed the first issue of *Strange* (*AM#97*), a miniseries that relaunched Doctor Strange into the Marvel Universe, which was very weak, for the most part. Conversely, *The Mystic Hands of Doctor Strange #1* pays homage to Marvel's 1970s black and white magazines and evokes the period and style perfectly. The one-shot issue contains three stories, the best of

which is by Peter Milligan and classic *Strange* artist Frank Brunner, in which a man comes to the Doctor to help him forget the guilt he carries over the accidental death of his wife. The story completely captures the essence of Doctor Strange—ethereal and menacing yet with everyday human emotions firmly grounding the action. Kieron Gillen and Frazer Irving's tale also impresses, and even Ted McKeever's works, if only because it's so different from the previous two. Hopefully, Marvel will continue to release similar projects: a black and white *Rampaging Hulk* one-shot would be fantastic.

I really wanted to like *Zombies vs. Robots Adventure*. I love zombies, I love robots and I love comics—easy sell! Unfortunately, while the concept is promising, the execution just doesn't work. *ZVR*

Adventure #1 is comprised of three stories set before and during the great *Zombie/Robot War*.



However, rather than three complete stories, what we have are the opening installments of three larger stories.

While this may work in the long run, the structure of each eight-page segment is weak and the conclusions come suddenly and without

suitable climaxes. Of the three, only the second tale—in which a janitor discovers a lab filled with abandoned robots—works, primarily due to Paul McCaffrey's excellent art. Still, in the end, the reader is left with three first acts that just hang there, with little to entice one to read on.

Niles and Wrightson are at it again. After their nihilist, monster-filled *Dead*, *She Said* (see review in *AM#98*) comes this three-issue series about an LA detective who teams up with a Frankenstein monster-like federal agent to solve the mystery of a seemingly ageless Hollywood starlet. *The Ghoul #3* ties up the story in typical Wrightson

fashion, with plenty of blood and tentacles on display. Like *Dead*, this book is a lot of fun, and

manages to be a pastiche of both detective and horror stories, without being condescending to either. Niles and Wrightson are slowly creating their own macabre universe (there's a cameo here by a character from *Dead*), and there are plenty of hints in this issue that there's more in store from this great collaboration.

The characters that inhabit the fictional Greek Street (in the title of the same name) may seem a tad familiar. There's a boy who unknowingly has sex with his mother and inadvertently causes her death, a girl who foresees disaster and is believed by no one, and a blood-



seeking Fury out to avenge her own murder from beyond the grave. Peter Milligan calls up iconic Greek legends and gives them a modern twist while teasing that there may be more of a connection to the myths. *Greek Street* is not an easy read, though, in the first two issues alone we're introduced to a large cast that's hard to keep track of, and Davide Gianfelice's art, while well executed, has a habit of making many of the characters look alike. Luckily, this volume collects the first five issues in one handy tome, making it a smoother, more satisfying read.

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THE ART OF THE NASTY

Nightmare USA

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THE ART OF THE NASTY by Nigel Wiggins and Marc Morris

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VENDETTA
Marie Corelli
Ziff Press



Granted, she writes with a heavy Decadent gothic hand and the book's narrator pours forth emotion with clobbering intensity, but there's little in the way of tension and plot twists to divert *Vendetta* away from complete predictability.

Also, unlike her gothic contemporaries, Corelli seems incapable of subtle characterization. Fabio is a scorned lover, a man obsessed and a colossal bore who can't even hatch a creative murder plot. As such, the novel's great crescendo is an unsatisfying anticlimax, and the bloody resolve the novel boldly foreshadows is left unfulfilled. Still, it's easy to imagine how Corelli's style caught the fancy of the Victorian public, with its gut-wrenching tumult. Yet for all the salacious sentiment *Vendetta* oozes, there's little to distinguish it for modern readers.

EVAN DAVIES

THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF THE BEST OF BEST NEW HORROR: TWO DECADES OF DARK FICTION

Stephen Jones, ed.
Robinson

"Best" and "new" are fairly relative terms, especially in the case of this book. For one thing, *The Best of Best New Horror* does not contain any new stories or novellas. What's more, these are not even the twenty best stories from the *Best New Horror* series that editor Stephen Jones has been carefully compiling for the last two decades. Instead, Jones has selected what he believes is the best story or novella from each of the twenty volumes of the annual anthology and positioned them in chronological order to create a snapshot of recent horror history. Each story features a new introduction from Jones, making this collection something of a commemoration of the series itself.



A TRYING TOME ■ FAMILIAR FICTION ■ WEAVER OF TALES

Time hasn't been particularly attentive to Marie Corelli. The British author's name seldom appears amongst the ranks of better-known gothic scribes such as Poe, Biondi and Stoker. Yet, at her height in the late 1800s, Corelli's popularity was massive. Her novels commanded a fan frenzy on par with that of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series today—sales were in the 100,000s and influential figures such as the Queen of England were part of her dedicated throngs. Yet the critics blasted Corelli, deriding her work as pulp for the masses, and over time the masses moved past her decadence, blubbery sentimentality and affected melodrama.

Now, much like her sophomore novel's protagonist who comes back from the dead, so to speak, 1886's *Vendetta* (i.e., *Vendetta*) or *The Story of One Forgotten—jeesh!* has been unearthed and reprinted. But perhaps it should have remained buried.

The tale of revenge and obsession, set in late 19th-century Naples, begins with narrator Fabio Romeni's macabre ordeal: a victim of the cholera epidemic, he is prematurely announced dead. After awakening in the pitch black of his family's tomb, he frees himself from his grotesque and fetid surroundings, and conveniently discovers a mass of pirate's treasure. Disfigured, he returns home to his wife and best friend, only to learn of their ambivalence to his demise, and their illicit affair.

Much like Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Vendetta* features a slow-building plot of treachery and revenge, with Romeni assuming a new identity and returning to his haughty social circles to punish and humiliate. However, unlike *The Count*, Corelli's work is unsophisticated and unremarkable.

For most of these tales, this is not a second printing but rather the third or fourth; all have been previously anthologized in other collections or published in well-known magazines such as *Ward Tales*. Even casual readers of horror fiction will recognize a great number of the authors included, if not the stories themselves. Among them: Clive Barker's "Haeckel's Tale" (which appeared in the inaugural *Dark Delicacies* anthology), Stephen King's "The New York Times at Special Bargain Rates" (from *Just After Sunset*) and Neil Gaiman's "Queen of Knives" (from *Smoke and Mirrors*). Even the less mainstream writers in the collection are still predominately award-winning and well-established in their own circles.

Being organized by year, the subject matter and style of horror varies from tale to tale. Some have no comparison, such as International Horror Guild Award-winner "Cleopatra Butterly" by Elizabeth Hand, a coming-of-age novella about a woman who can turn a man into a butterfly by taking him to bed. More familiar horror subject matter (read: vampires) often comes in the form of satire, as in Kim Newman's "The Other Side of Midnight," which follows a vamp-detective hired by Orson Welles to investigate the man funding his Oracula film.

There's no doubt that each story has its justified place in this book and all are unique and well-crafted. But one can't help but wonder if this release was really necessary. Unless you're a fanatical horror-lit completist, buying it for Jones' additional commentary, or are entirely new to the *Best New Horror* series, there is really no need to repurchase these old tales in a new package, no matter how priceless each may be.

JESSA SOBCEK

THE GRIM READER

ALTERED VISIONS: THE ART OF VINCENT CHONG

Vincent Chong
Tells

While Vincent Chong's art certainly cries on the work of Dave McKean, that doesn't make these rare and fantastical photo-illustrations any less compelling. This compact hardcover collects twenty of the artist's works, most of which were commissioned for book and album covers, such as the dark-hued visage of a maniacally grinning man for Joe Hill's *Heart-Shaped Box*. It pairs them with short blurbs of how each piece came to be, making this a brief but potent portfolio of Chong's most memorable creations.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



BURIAL

Neil Cross

Simon and Schuster

Neil Cross' seventh novel, *Burial*, is a supernatural crime-thriller that slowly builds tension but fails to deliver on the action. Protagonist Nathan has a murderous secret in his past, which threatens to come to light when an old friend shows up at his doorstep, claiming the woman they both killed is now haunting him. Suffering from an unconvincing plot and repellent characters, this sluggish novel is more an exercise in reader perseverance than genuine entertainment.

JESSA BORCZUK



THE ZOMBIE COMBAT MANUAL: A GUIDE TO FIGHTING THE LIVING DEAD

Roger M

Berkley Trade

In the event of a zombie outbreak, could you throw down? This military-style handbook packs the know-how you'll need to stay alive, including illustrated step-by-step training in hand-to-hand combat, detailed analyses of zombie anatomy, knee-slappin' scenario-related strategies and field reports from combat vets. There's been no shortage of zombie reference books lately, but none as hilariously methodical as this one. Be ready!

TREVOR TURNISH



A SCI-FI SWARM AND HORROR HORDE: INTERVIEWS WITH 62 FILMMAKERS

Tom Weaver
McFarland

Nobody captures the oral history of fantastic cinema quite like author and researcher Tom Weaver, who has more than 600 interviews to his name to date. His latest book, *A Sci-Fi Swarm and Horror Horde*, compiles conversations with dozens more fascinating figures, including Roger Corman, filmmaker/author to Melchior (*The Angry Red Planet*), and even pudgy-faced *The Sadist* star Arch Hall Jr., an interview Weaver has cited among his favorites.

What's notable about this book — something of a monster itself at more than 400 pages — is that it diverges from his previously successful Q&A format. Aside from a few quote-sprinkled pieces written as profiles and some entries which include the interview questions in parentheses, Weaver has opted for transcriptions of his subjects narrating their story as one long monologue.

It's understandable why Weaver wanted to switch up his style after a dozen or so books, but it's not an improvement. Without an interviewer's interjections, the monologues are often rambling and focus primarily on the actor's personal story, which is a problem for anyone only tangentially related to genre filmmaking. Occasionally, readers must sift through several pages of tiresome autobiography to find a half-remembered tidbit about working with Boris Karloff.

Yet, despite these baffling editorial choices, *A Sci-Fi Swarm and Horror Horde* still delivers a dose of absorbing content, leaving Weaver's steel-clad reputation for uncovering juicy anecdotes and delightful insights intact. Highlights of this installment include memories of cheapie studio Bel-Air Productions by Paul Wurtzel (son of uber-producer Sol) and Ken Kolb reminiscing about his script for *Sinbad Goes to Mars*, the famously unrealized Ray Harryhausen project. There's even a gossip piece that suggests the character of Norman Bates was not based on serial killer Ed Gein, but *Castle of Frankenstein* magazine editor/publisher Calvin Beck.

Despite the quibbles over presentation, Weaver's info-packed book is still a must for fans of his work. Newcomers, however, are probably better off sticking to the classic Q&A presentation of his earlier releases.

PAUL CORUPE

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: VAMPIRE HUNTER

Seth Grahame-Smith
Grand Central

Don't let the ludicrousness of the concept fool you: Seth Grahame-Smith's follow-up to the international bestseller *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is a painstakingly well-researched account of the sixteenth US President's little-known career as a scourge of the undead. In his short introduction, the author outlines the circumstances that led him to come into possession of the journals that detail Lincoln's

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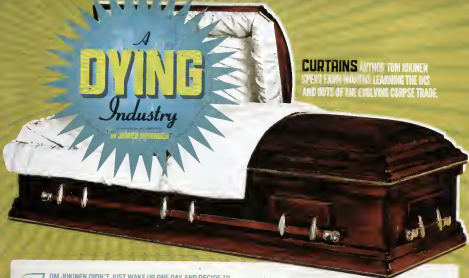
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A DYING Industry

by JIM KENNEL

CURTAINS ACTOR TOM JOKINEN SPENT EIGHT MONTHS LEARNING THE INS AND OUTS OF THE EVOLVING CORPSE TRADE.



TOM JOKINEN DIDN'T JUST WAKE UP ONE DAY AND DECIDE TO devote eight months of his life to slogging coffins, corpses and tubs of embalming fluid in a Winnipeg funeral parlour, then write a book about his experience. It started while he was working as a producer at CBC Radio Winnipeg in 2006 and a search of the Costco website revealed that the consumer wholesale company was selling caskets online and at some of its retail outlets. To Jokinen's disbelief, a little more surfing revealed a multitude of e-tailors selling mail-order coffins.

"Imagine buying your giant industrial tub of relish, a flatscreen TV and a 16-gauge stainless steel Kentucky Rose casket at Costco," he says. "Where do you keep it when you get it home?"

Jokinen was coming to a startling conclusion: our collective relationship with death and ritual had radically changed in his lifetime.

After producing a short radio piece on the modern funeral industry, Jokinen knew he'd only scratched the surface. "With the impact of cremation and the social shift away from religion and tradition it seemed to me that the so-called 'deathcare' sector was ripe for a closer, deeper look."

So he contacted Neil Bardal, a third-generation undertaker he'd interviewed, and by the time he'd talked his way into an eight-month apprenticeship at Bardal's funeral home, one of the most morbidly fascinating books of the last decade was well on its way to publication. Prepare to be both shocked and amused by *Curtains: Adventures of an undertaker in training* (out now from Random House Canada), a memoir of Jokinen's experiences with the dead, as well as an in-depth look at the modern funeral business. Besides letting readers in on the nits and bolts of cremation and prepping bodies for viewing and burial—how do they keep the corpse's eyes from opening in the middle of the funeral?—Jokinen explores the industry's embrace of its customers' non-religious, pro-consumer-choice values.

Want your ashes interred in a teddy bear for your loved ones to cuddle? How about a portrait painted in oils mixed with your cremated remains? Today's funeral homes can do that for you.

Jokinen is quite candid about his immersion in the eerie world of the dead. "Like most plugged-in Westerners I had very little experience with real

death," he admits. "It's true that as a failed med student I had dissected a cadaver to learn anatomy, but that was a very clinical experience. The dead at a funeral home have names, families, dreams unfulfilled, dogs that loved them: personalities. So the first time I saw a woman getting her hair brushed, dressed in her best blue dress and chunky black shoes, I thought I'd walked into a spa, but of course the woman was dead."

Jokinen never quite got used to the stillness or handling of the departed, either. "The dead are so very still, so empty. You expect people to do something, anything: wink, scratch an ear, but with the dead there's not even a spark. ... They're heavier than you'd expect and very difficult to dress; putting a shirt and suit jacket on a dead man is like trying to put a sweater on a tree."

He says folks should ignore the negative images of funeral directors fed to us by Hollywood. In *Curtains* he puts a more human, and more practical, face on those in the industry, portraying them as "regular folks with unusual careers"—many of whom see the job as a way to help people in times of turmoil and vulnerability.

Jokinen's experience also taught him that the funeral industry will survive society's shift away from more traditional, expensive burial rites. He sees simpler funerals in the future, ones that celebrate spiritual and personal beliefs such as eco-consciousness.

"Tradition and ritual based on faith have lost their grip, and commerce is rushing in to fill the gap, as always," he notes. "More people will want to go out 'green,' cremate rather than take up space in a cemetery or opt for burial in a natural forest."

Finally, given his matter-of-fact approach to the subject of the death industry, one can't help but ask Jokinen if he had any "Boo!" moments while on the job. While he doesn't have any himself, he does offer up one that happened to a co-worker who encountered the body of a suicide victim.

Jokinen relates, "This co-worker couldn't keep his opinion to himself—he thought suicide was selfish, and he said so, out loud, with no one else in the building but this dead body. Suddenly, he felt a pair of hands push him, hard, from behind. From then on he decided to keep a cap on his hubris and offer the dead appropriate awe and respect." ☐

CURTAINS

Adventures of an undertaker in training



Tom Jokinen

LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

WINTER 2011

If you just flipped the page and expected to find another book review, I apologize – actually, no, I don't. Instead, I'd like to welcome you to my very own musty, dusty corner of the magazine – my library of strange and forgotten tomes, if you will. It's a place where I'll unearth treasures old and new.

To begin, allow me to recap this year's World Horror Convention in Brighton, England – a first for the con, which had never left North America until now. If you love scary stories as much as I do, there was no better place to be from March 25 to 28.

WHC is many things to many people; for me it is a place to meet authors, network for the mag, pump my mega-pen and – like many of you reading this – learn some tricks of the trade that will hopefully help me pen my first horror novel. That said, the con's numerous panels are always of interest, with subjects ranging from "No Royalties: Should You Ever Sign a 'Work for Hire' Contract?" to "Deal or No Deal. How Do I Get an Agent?" Of course, there is just as much to be learned from the intimate and interactive Q&As; this year saw horror heavyweights Tenth Lee, Brian Lumley, James Herbert and Dennis Etchison participate in candid discussions about their work and careers.

In addition – because there is simply never any opportunity to be bored at WHC – there were also author readings, an art show and auction, a mass autograph session with dozens of scribes and a dealer's room. In the evenings, attendees could drop by any number of parties, or do what I did and take in a theatrical performance. On Friday night, Robert Lloyd Parry stepped into the role of M.R. James for a dramatic telling of James' 1925 tale "A Warning to the Curious," while Saturday saw two original one-man shows put on by Reggie Oliver (*Pluss-Clad*) and The Copper Wig, respectively, which wove horror into the fabric of life in the theatre. Both nights featured hilarious horror-comedy interludes by online podcast troupe In The Gloaming (see Roadkill, p.10).

Other highlights of the event included the annual Bram Stoker Awards dinner and ceremony, and a Q&A and autograph signing session with actress Ingrid Pitt. For me personally, however, nothing topped the surprise arrival of Neil Gaiman, who I've been trying to meet for the better part of the last ten years. He was the final genre author on my dying-to-meet list, so although I snagged a mere two minutes of his time to talk about *Rue Morgue*, it was still dead cool to meet this down-to-earth icon.

While admittedly ticket prices for WHC tend to be a little steep (in the \$90-150 range), if you're a genuine horror lit nerd like me, the event is well worth yanking open your purse strings for. Hell, I'm already psyched for next year's installment, which will take place in Austin, Texas from April 28 to May 1 and has Joe Hill, Joe R. Lansdale, Steve Niles, Brian Koebe and many others already on the bill. (Visit whc2011.org for more details.) Hope to see you there, and in the meantime, back here for more late-night trips to the library!

MONICA S. RUEHLER

penchant for citing vampires with a selection of heavy weaponry, from there, he launches into a roller-coaster biographical narrative laced with (subtly adapted) extracts from the journals themselves.

Rather than using the predatory nature of vampires as a complex and overwrought metaphor for slavery in America, Grahame-Smith goes for the jagular and takes it literally: the vampires have come to the New World after being hunted and hounded out of Europe, and are now in league with slave owners and politicians in a bid to keep themselves in a steady supply of human blood. After losing his mother to a vampire attack at the age of ten, young Abe devotes himself to stopping the monsters by any means necessary. With the help of a mysterious stranger named Henry Sturges, Abe sets out to learn as much as possible about the network of blood-suckers, and destroy them.

The 19th-century setting affords plenty of opportunity to explore the gruesome nature of everyday frontier life in a time before antibiotics and municipal sewers. Furthermore, the relentless (and non-fictional) losses suffered by Abe, as Grahame-Smith weaves in actual historical events, give an extra sense of urgency to his mission.

Grahame-Smith is a solid storyteller, and *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* is much lighter on the comedy than *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies*, but despite some thoroughly enjoyable moments of splatter, it's unlikely to chill you to the bone. It's really more of an adventure story than a brooding vampire novel. It seems likely that, much as with *PoPz*, the better you know the source material, the more you'll dig it. But even if your knowledge of the Civil War doesn't extend beyond a vague memory of Vivian Leigh in a corset, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* is still a blood-drenched, fast-paced read.

JUSTINE WARWICK

BOOK OF SHADOWS

Alexandra Sokoloff

St. Martin's

My question for the goth set: are you sick of being portrayed in the media as a bunch of morose, Satan-worshipping murderers? You are? Well, I hate to rain on your parade, but the opening chapters of Alexandra Sokoloff's *Book of Shadows* indicates that we're bound for West Memphis Three territory here, as a Beantown-based goth singer is accused of the ritualistic murder of a wealthy college girl. The evidence is overwhelming and it's case closed until the beautiful and mysterious Wiccan Tarith Cabanus informs tough-as-nails homicide detective Adam Garret that the real killer is still at large and, with Samhain approaching, is ready to strike again. Naturally, he calls bullshit, but then more bodies turn up and he witnesses things that defy logical explanation. So, he becomes Scully to Tarith's Mulder as she leads him into a twilight land where Otherworldly Forces™ are reverently trying to enter our dimension and so forth.

I'm a wash-and-wear, cash-and-carry type of guy, so proto-goth fiction is not my bag, and Sokoloff does a damn fine job of trying my patience, as she hungrily embraces and dry-humps almost every horror cliché in the book. This frustration grows when she seems unwilling to commit to her premise – a fatal move for any writer in any genre. For instance, is Tarith a genuine witch or a con artist? Is this real magic or all a drug-induced hallucination? While this ambiguity gives us some dramatic momentum and the requisite hot witch-on-manly-cop sex scenes, it continually defies believability. Would Garret really remain the steadfast skeptic after everything he witnesses, right up to the definitely supernatural climax? Seems completely implausible.

Yet, what Sokoloff lacks in the originality department is more than adequately made up for in mood. Her portrayal of Boston, Salem and the surrounding environs is spot on, and she takes great delight in detailing every brutal injustice done to the bodies of her hapless victims. So while it's all very silly and far-fetched, if you (unlike me) are into this kind of thing and can suspend your disbelief at the door, there's still enough here to make *Book of Shadows* entertaining, if ultimately forgettable.

BRAD ABRAHAM



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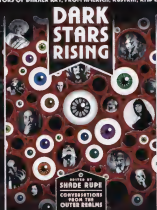
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TRAVELOQUE OF TERROR

MUSÉE FRAGONARD D'ALFORT PARIS, FRANCE

BY LISA LADUCEUR



AND YOU THOUGHT BODY WORLDS WAS WEIRD.

Way back in 1776, a French surgeon named Honoré Fragonard went to work at Paris' newly opened veterinary college ("L'École Royale Vétérinaire"). He was a man of high standing, already the director of the world's first veterinary school in Lyon. But Fragonard had some unusual ideas about how best to study anatomy. He could have used wax replicas (popular in medical schools of the time). He could have simply put his real specimens in jars of formaldehyde, a slightly creepier but still acceptable procedure. Instead, Fragonard, cousin of famed French painter Jean-Honoré, developed an original technique that showed off his flair for the dramatic. His bodies and body parts were dissected, skinned, preserved — and posed. He called them *écorchés* ("flayed figures").

Go figure, Fragonard became famous for his *écorchés*, but also feared. By the time he presented his Horseman of the Apocalypse — a flayed human corpse, ru-

moured to be his own fiancée, on a flayed dead horse, surrounded by foetuses riding sheep — he was expelled for being a madman.

Perhaps this is why the modern-day Musée Fragonard is not in many Paris guidebooks. While the city's crypts and catacombs, graves and gargoyles are considered must-sees even for the squeamish, these anatomical anomalies remain a hidden gem for the macabre-inclined visitor.

The place is not easy to find, either; it's hidden inside the national vet school, located on the southeast side of the city, tucked far away from Paris' more tourist-friendly centre. The smell of horse manure hits the nose as one navigates around the stables through tree-lined paths, one of which leads to the entrance of the museum, barely marked by a sign. But once up the stone staircases it's clear that this is the right spot: there's a full-size skeleton next to the admission desk.

The 300-year-old museum, which has only been open to the public since 1991, was renovated in 2008 but still looks like a Victorian-era cabinet of curiosities. Towering over the few visitors who make the trek are dozens of glass cases, each one stuffed with specimens of a macabre or curious nature, many accompanied by antiquated, handwritten labels. There are 4500 objects in all, so it's well worth taking the free audio guide (available in English) to better understand the medical marvels staring back at you. Produced for tourists, it's a series of short tracks that are numbered to correspond to specific exhibits so you can navigate it at your own pace, plus it offers detailed information about the history of the building and the various diseases that ravaged many of the specimens.

The exhibits begin fairly tame with skulls, row upon row of them, human and animal. There are other body parts here, too, showing the evolution of veterinary sciences. It's the insides which are most mysterious, of course. Ever seen a preserved cow's stomach? Funny how it looks like a prop from an alien flick — some kind of oversized, bloated larvae. You'll get up close and personal with genitalia of all kinds in the reproductive organs section, plus see veins splayed out like pretty

foliage for your pleasure. A small dead zoo of full-sized animal skeletons and parts fill a second room. These are all fun and freakish in their own way, such as the case filled entirely with the front sections of grinning horses' jaws mounted in rows. You might wonder if H.R. Giger modelled the heads of his aliens after them!

Then you meet the real monsters.

It's the museum's extensive collection of medical anomalies that will give you a real sense of the environment in which Fragonard was operating. Here, you'll be confronted with animal birth defects and human diseases that transform bodies into objects of both wonder and terror. Behold the wax death mask of a former vet student afflicted with glanders — a horse, donkey and mule disease causing pus, blood and lesions to cover the face — which on rare occasion has been transferred to humans. The animals in Fragonard's time didn't fare too well, either, judging by the number of defects on display. See the six-toed rooster, the two-headed calf and... what's this? A genuine calf Cyclops?

Yes, the monstrosities section displays several specimens normally reserved for fiction or hoaxes. It's a very good thing if you've not yet heard of cyclops, the actual, very rare, congenital defect that produces human babies with only one eye. Otto sirenokwels, the mermaid's disease. In a cloudy jar floats an infant born with a tail where its two legs should be. On and on, these freaks of nature call into question some of our treasured monster myths. What if storytellers simply ran with what nature already created, transmuting biology's failures into tall tales? Confronted with these disturbing shelves of sorrow, one might flee from the cabinets into the very back section of the museum. Of course, one would be advised to know what's behind the door first.

There, in a darkened room that contrasts with the main hall's bright and wide open spaces, are Fragonard's most famous creations: the *écorchés*. He made dozens in his lifetime, but only these remain. First up, the aforementioned Horseman of the Apocalypse, which is impres-



sive, yet not quite as creepy as the Man with Mandible. Allegedly inspired by the Bible story of Samson slaying an army using only a donkey jaw, it features a standing man wielding a mandible, his arm frozen in mid-swing. His skinned body is a web of hard, shiny muscles and coloured veins. Smaller écorchés are displayed nearby, such as the trio of fetuses caught suspended in what looks like a jug. Dance macabre, indeed.

While these back room écorchés are surrounded by some other fairly standard museum stuff – preserved butterflies, snakes, and mysterious goop in jars – they really are not your average artifacts. The way the dead have been turned into sculptures would be obscene to some contemporary viewers, and it really does call into question Fragonard's mentality at the time. Was he a mad scientist?

The museum's literature doesn't address this. Rather, bilingual placards explain how the surgeon preserved the bodies. First, the blood vessels were drained and injected with wax, then the body dissected and plunged into a vat of alcohol, which would dehydrate it. Fragonard would then pose his "models," using frames to keep them in place, as the alcohol evaporated, they would harden into permanent position. Once dry, they would be painted – red for the arteries, blue for veins – and covered in resin. That shiny varnish doesn't just look good under the spotlights, it has kept the insects away for hundreds of years.

If this is starting to sound familiar, perhaps you're one of the millions who have lined up to visit a Body Worlds exhibit. Certainly, Germany's Gunther von Hagens has made quite an impact with his plastinated corpses, shocking the sensibilities of those who believe science should be sober. But as a visit to the Fragonard museum proves, the vague terrain between studying anatomy and making art has long been blurred. Part natural history museum, part circus sideshow and part gallery, the museum is a perfect way to spend an hour off the beaten track of Paris, contemplating what beauty may lie in the grotesquery of deformities, disease and death.

The Musée Fragonard D'Alfort is located at 7 Général de Gaulle Ave at the metro station École Vétérinaire de Maisons-Alfort. Open Saturday and Sunday 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Admission 7 Euros. Non-flash photography is permitted. For more info, visit musee.vet-alfort.fr



Archae: Curiousities: (clockwise from top left) The 'horseman' écorché, the 'plastic' of a plastic monstrosities, a two-headed calf, a human fetus écorché, and (opposite) a close-up of the Horseman's preserved face and torso

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THE GORE•MET

MENU: REALITY BITES... AND STABS, AND BLUUGEONS

Rockumentaries and others that incorporate cinéma vérité techniques in order to appear factual – have long been a staple of the genre. See acknowledged classics *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980) and *Man Bites Dog* (1992), surprise blockbusters such as *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and *Paranormal Activity* (2009), as well as a slew of notorious underground films that have appeared in this space, notably the *Guinea Pig* entries, *The Last Horror Movie* (2003) and the *August Underground* trilogy. Two forthcoming films are worthy additions to this canon.

Long Pigs (2007) is a clever Canadian riff on *Man Bites Dog*, written and directed by Toronto filmmakers Chris Power and Nathan Hynes. They portray themselves as documentarians chronicling the daily life of non-descript serial killer Anthony McAlister (Anthony Aflano). Unlike most serial killers, Anthony does not kill for thrills or pleasure, but for meat, as he is an unrepentant cannibal.

The film opens with Anthony cruising for an appropriate victim amongst prostitutes working a seedy street corner, while the filmmakers are riding in the back of his car. After rejecting a couple of potential victims for being “too stringy,” Anthony fixes on a rather plump hooker and entices her back to his home. They retire to the basement, ostensibly for sex, but as the filmmakers are asking the girl a couple of innocuous interview questions, Anthony strikes, caving her skull in with a hammer. He apologizes afterward for the sudden attack, telling the documentarians he doesn’t want his victims to know what is about to happen to them as adrenaline ruins the meat. Then, he strangles her corpse up and methodically (and graphically) butchers it for the benefit of the camera, explaining the process as he goes.

As in *Man Bites Dog*, the filmmakers are at



first shocked by, but gradually become complicit with, the gruesome crimes. Anthony is charming and well-spoken, prone to waxing philosophically on the virtues of eating human flesh. They follow him around as he prowls a residential neighborhood for a victim, works as a valet at a high-end restaurant and visits his mother in a nursing home, before eventually acting as accomplices when he murders a corrupt city politician. This relationship quickly deteriorates when the filmmakers begin to question Anthony’s inconsistent stories, and he realizes he has revealed far too much of himself to them. The air of authenticity is bolstered by interspersed interview segments with a detective (Shane Harbison) and a psychologist (Kelly McIntosh), while a radio talk show host (Roger King) provides background colour on Anthony’s crime spree and his victims.

Big Bite Entertainment is set to release *Long Pigs* on June 8; hit up longpigsthefilm.com for the wicked trailer and further info.

Marco Walz’ *La petite mort... Die Nasty* (2009) is what *Nasty!* (2005) could have been. The

plots of both bear more than a little resemblance, although an opening voice-over declares that this one is based on a true story. College students Simon (Andreas Pape), his blind girlfriend Nina (Inés Zehnoul) and her friend Dodo (Anna Habeck) are off on a holiday to Mallorca, where Simon plans to propose to Nina. They decide to do a little sightseeing during a lengthy layover in Frankfurt and are robbed in a back alley. Simon convinces the girls that they should drown their sorrows in a sketchy fetish bar, but when Dodo runs afoul of one of the daughters of the owner, Maman Fabienne (Manouche), the trio is taken captive and made the unwilling stars of an internet torture show.

Unlike Eli Roth’s wimp-out, Walz’s film delivers on the grue, courtesy of German underground gore god Diab Holtenbach, best known as director of storied splatter flicks *The Burning Moon* (1992) and *Prematos: Lord of the Living Dead* (1997). Highlights include a balls “n” all castration, a gnarly scalping (with a gratuitously exposed brain!) and a hand shoved into a manual meat grinder. It’s not just torture porn, though, as it’s a surprisingly stylish film that effectively utilizes some fantastic locations.

La petite mort is currently available without English options on PAL DVD, from NSM Records. Watch for news of a North American release here: myspace.com/lapetitemortmovie.



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REVIEWS BY DAVID ALEXANDER, KEITH CARROLL, EVAN DAVES,
THE GORE MET MARK R. HASAN, LAST CHANCE LANCE,
ARJUN VON LUPTON, SEAN PLUMMER AND TREVOR TUMINSKI.



THE CRAZIES (2010)

Mark Isham

VAROSE SARABANDE

It's been a few years since Mark Isham's been involved with horror, but unlike his score for *The Mist*, his latest return to the genre marks a welcome reversion of the ethereal/industrial electronics that helped make *The Hitcher* such a terrifying cult film. Isham knows how to exploit fears within insular communities and his clean sonic designs support stories where a hard-to-pin-down force is slowly wreaking havoc. Whether it's hard percussive hits or digitized rhythms, one feels immediate unease. His grasp of melody ensures small pockets of humanity within the sound of *The Crazies*, but their shredded form infers a steadily increasing body count. Varose's hour-long CD features lengthy cues that ebb, flow, smash and soothe. Isham's hypnotic electronics' been sorely missed in horror scores. Welcome back, man. **MRH** ★★★★★



GRACE

Austin Wintory

BUS/SOUNDTRACK RECORDS

Austin Wintory has composed a score that directly and intimately addresses the drama of a woman desperate to succeed as a mother, even as her child is rotting from the inside out. That physical and mental weirdness is captured through

modern and experimental writing, as well as the heavy use of processed sounds. Solo cello and female vocals are the sole "normal" elements within the score, and as the mother's mental breakdown worsens, string and grungy woodwind sounds flicker and snarl, and small melodic fragments are smothered by pulses and winds of vocal echoes. *Grace* is refreshing in the way it consistently piques the listener's curiosity, and subsequent listens reveal even finer nuances that make Wintory's score a genre mini-classic. It's not exactly accessible, but for those hungry for abstract ideas, *Grace* is a warped little gem. **MRH** ★★★★★



ROBE

Bleak

CRUCIAL BLISS RECORDS

The latest release of doom drone from the prolific duo of Kyle Willey and Adam Cooley is an exercise in control. With *Bleak*, which eschews song titles for four lengthy self-titled segments, the Indiana musicians/filmmakers demonstrate the marriage between visual and auditory elements by composing creeping dread so convincing, it may induce panic in the listener. Their toolkit seems limited to effervescent static and twisting creaks built on groaning foundations, but listen too long and, like staring into a snowy TV, you're bound to start imagining things in it. The third act is where the bad noise really starts to bare its claws, introducing fuzzy discordant melodies like funeral foghorns wafting into a rickety, haunted harbour. But for all its nuanced discipline, *Bleak* also becomes an exercise in patience. Like most sparse instrumental albums,

it's not consistently engaging, but believably scores what might be taking shape in the shadows 'round bedtime. **TT** ★★★★★



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DEVIL'S RUN

If you're searching for a theme here, artist names such as Murder by Death, Reverend Deadeye and a Slow Death & Loneliness, plus song titles including "Dead Men and Sinners," "Devil, Devil" and "Lucifer" are your first clues — after the "Best of Dark Roots Music" in the compilation's title, of course. Taking an unrepentant approach to traditional tunes about killin' and conspiring with Old Scratch, Devil's Run gives us seventeen selections from its catalogue that range from Dimostore Troutadours' Tom Waits-like clanker "Dark Rooms,"

to classic murder ballads (Red Clay River's exquisite "Rattlesnake Mountain" and Warren Jackson Hearne's languid "God Will Strike Me Down"), to some seriously evil-sounding electric blues. Both "Snakebite" from Reverend Deadeye and "Roses on a Grave" by Phantom of the Black Hills lay down hell on hot asphalt. Need redemption? Piss off. Wanna dance with demons on the banks of the lake of fire? Well, sinner, yer home. **DA** ★★★★★



WUMPSCUT:

Siamese

METROPOLIS

I've always been a little pissed at Wumpscut: for stealing the Weyland-Yutani Corporation logo from *Alien*, but I can mostly forgive them after listening to their latest CD, *Siamese*. Definitely their darkest album in more than a decade, with tracks such as "Falling from Lucifer's Grace" and

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Danny Elfman

VAROSE SARABANDE

If you blend the sounds of Wojciech Kilar (*Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *The Ninth Gate*) and John Williams (*Jaws*, *Star Wars*), and filter the most organic components through Danny Elfman's mind, you get *The Wolfman*, a shockingly effective work that evokes the elegance of central European classical and vintage monster movie music. Transcending the wants of Wolfman's filmmakers, who dumped and later restored his score shortly before the film's release, Elfman's grandiloquent portrait of a tormented man-beast is filled with beautiful moments of intimate self-loathing, hunger for redemption and a nasty, snarling presence — all conveyed without synths or electronic pulses. It's a massive orchestral immersion into an era of music superstitions and gas-lit intellectualism, one that will certainly outlast one of the year's biggest cinematic fumbles. **MRH** ★★★★★



the BLOOD SPATTERED GUIDE

PHANTOM HYMNS

"The ghost in you, she don't fade."
THE PSYCHEDELIC FUNS

For this special 100th issue (yea us!) I wanted to pick something especially heavily to share with you. But, to be perfectly honest, my head has been stuck way deep in Danl Fifth and Gavin Baddeley's *The Gospel of Fifth book* (see *AM99*) and I've only been listening to the devil's music. This obsession with wicked songs led me to a strange and rare beast of a record about the occult, though, and it's too good to keep to myself.

The band is called The Ghost. In 197D, this five-piece from Birmingham, UK released its debut, *When You're Dead*. It's a psych/prog/folk rock record, the kind of hybrid (or is that high-brid?) thing that was going "round in those days, thanks to Jefferson Airplane and the brown acid at Woodstock. With its turbulent blues rhythms, trippy organ solos and sweet "summer of love" boy/girl harmonies, it's sonically pretty standard stuff. But, the lyrical themes were...



far out. The opening track "When You're Dead" starts off with "So now you're dead..." and then goes on about children and dogs and ashes and late nights and more things one can't quite make out in singer Paul Eastment's howl. (Eastment was also in another obscure band of the day, Velvet Fogg,

which once included Tony Iommi of Black Sabbath.) The song ends with "No one will remember you..." and since that single went exactly nowhere and the band broke up shortly after, it was kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, the album contains another track that really blows my mind.

"Night of the Warlock" is essentially a horror movie script. Act one: "Witches and demons start to crawl/Climbing up the garden wall." Act two: "Lightning strikes but there's no rain/Virgins come to life again." Act three: "Please save me Christ!" Okay, so maybe it's more of a warning against dabbling in black magic, but with Eastment at times channeling Native American chanting and pagan incantations, and the band rocking out in a way that foreshadows demon-obsessed heavy metal, it's a bewitching bit of proto-shock rock. You can hear The Ghost at myspace.com/theghostuk. And if you can actually find a copy of the original vinyl, it's worth approximately \$1000. Good luck!

SOUND BITE: Hey kids... Hot Topic poster boys The Murderdolls have reunited. Joey Jordison and Wednesday 13 are back in the studio, promising to "fuck formula, fuck the norm." Hey, there's a first time for everything.

LEISA LAPOUCHE



THE BLOOD SPATTERED GUIDE CAN BE HEARD WEEKLY ON RUEBORGWARRIOR.COM

"Blood Stigmata" coming off as eerily brooding lamentations that sound like they should be playing in the background as you and a couple of friends explore that abandoned mental asylum down the street. The moaning *Exorcist* samples are a nice touch and are guaranteed to send shivers down your spine. The black mascara-wearing club crowd won't be disappointed either, as this Bavarian band's unique blend of power dance, industrial, techno noise and experimental distortion reaches dangerous new heights with "Boneshaker Baybee," "Bam Bam" and "Loyal to my Hate," all destined for regular rotation in the world's scariest goth bars. Just tell 'em Chang and Eng sent you. LCL

★★★★



DARKTHRONE

Circle the Wagons

PEACEVILLE RECORDS

It's not like Darkthrone has anything to prove—as any black metal fan will attest, the genre wouldn't really be the genre without this duo. Instead of resting on their laurels though, the Norwegians continue to exhibit admirable disdain for stylistic complacency on *Circle the Wagons*, a rousing war cry of a title meant as a warning to "invaders of [their] metal domain." Exploring the punk and thrash influences of their recent work, this fourteenth album sounds both ugly and refreshingly to-the-point. Guitarist Nocturno Culto replaces his trademark buzz-saw tone with a thick, almost sludgy wall of distortion, while contributing histrionic vocals (alongside drummer Fenriz) that range from vomituous retches ("Stylized Corpse") to the droning bantones of the title track. It's hard to imagine that Darkthrone actually gives a shit what we think, but that's what makes the music so engaging: it's bereft of pretension and brimming with vitriol and misanthropy. ED ★★★★★



PSYCHO

The Grind Years

SELFMADEGO RECORDS

One of grind-punk's forgotten heroes, Boston's Psycho finally receives some overdue appreciation via this various 52-track onslaught of songs culled from its many releases between 1990 and 1994. Slowly transitioning from punk/thrash to outright deathgrind, the selections feature crossover thrash akin to D.R.I. and Cryptic Slaughter, coupled with heavy inspiration from the relentless barrage/extreme tempo shifts of early Napalm Death and the apocalyptic atmosphere of death metal luminaries Celtic Frost. Despite the advanced age of the material, *The Grind Years* is still a stunning blast of extremity coupled with Accused-worthy lyrics heavy on tongue-in-cheek gory fun as exemplified on numbskull blasts such as "Chainsaw Priest." KC ★★★★★



THE VISION BLEAK

Set Sail to Mystery

PROPERTY PRODUCTIONS

The Vision Bleak is a German horror metal duo that trades in goth metal with its heavy use of orchestral synths, crunchy yet melodic guitars and pretentious baritone vocals. The band's history of complex concept albums continues with its fourth one, *Set Sail to Mystery*, which returns to the "Deathship" story upon which the debut album, *The Deathship Has a New Captain*, was based. TVB has a very specific sound, meaning death and black metal dudes will likely hate it, while those with a taste for epic concept metal (as well as D&D, likely) will find it more appealing. The accompanying horror vibe is both romantic and classic, including an intro ("A Curse of the Grandest Kind") that

Experimental metal outfit **HOBGOBLIN** brings a true symphony of horror to *F.W. Murnau's* silent classic.

KILLING the SILENCE

by Mark R. Rosen

A NUMBER OF MUSICIANS HAVE TAKEN A STAB AT RESCORING F.W. MURNAU'S 1922 SILENT VAMPIRE CLASSIC *NOSFERATU*, including Hammer's James Bernard, metal band Type O Negative and Bernardo Uzeda (for the Murnau Foundation's restoration). One recent attempt from new label November Five gives *Nosferatu* a prog rock overhaul, plus one other additive: dialogue.

Yes, Count Orluk speaks! So do Renfield and the rest of the cast, backed by sound effects and a new score crafted by Hobgoblin, a band comprised of members from Neurosis, Skinlab, Sacrilege B.C., and Re-Ignition. A dream project for Hobgoblin's leader Strehpon Taylor, it took two years to complete due to a number of factors: scheduling all the musicians from the various bands into the studio to record, and the complex chore of conforming a silent film to the sound realm.

"I've always had the idea in the back of my mind to not just rescore *Nosferatu* but to do the dialogue," explains Taylor, a first-time film composer who is also a major fan of German silent shockers *The Golem* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.

Drawing from his years with the comedy band SLOB, Taylor went back to Bram Stoker's novel and created an English script that matched the original scenes performed by the German-speaking thespians. Each band member voiced a set of characters, and Taylor also handled a new narration, which replaced the excised intertitles. Taylor's approach is deliberately tongue-in-cheek, but

the band became surprised as their nascent music developed into a traditional horror score.

Hobgoblin is ostensibly an homage to the Italian prog rock/composing force Goblin, but in its *Nosferatu* one can also hear classical, thrash metal and fusion jazz. "Renfield's Theme" is a perfect example of the band adapting a two-note sequence for rock and classical, then recombining it into a skittering jazz rendition in "Victims Dance," using synth keyboards, organs and elastic bass. (The theme also captures the essence of Renfield as a man who is completely delighted to be going crazy.) Vestiges of the script's comical touches are also present in "The Dawn Marker Theme," where Hobgoblin shackles mocking brass, wordless voices and a synth concertina to a waltz rhythm.

A blend of ragtime and classical piano solos in "Love Never Dies Nina Theme" gives the score some lovely tenderness, and "Count Orluk" nicely captures the bloodsucker's scheming nature with rapping organic percussion, deep bass notes and electronic effects evoking a stalking cluster of evil. Orluk's secondary theme, "Bringing Out the Dead," is a catchy combination of heavy guitar and gothic chorals, remixed by Taylor with doom-laden lyrics for the film's end titles.

Taylor acknowledges some *Nosferatu* purists won't be happy with his radical augmentations that admittedly make the film feel rather weird.

"I know exactly what it is: we dubbed over a classic movie. There's nothing more to it," he explains. "I made it for people

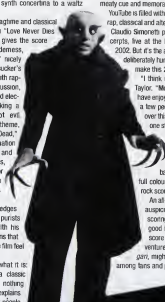
who, one, haven't seen the movie and, two, won't sit through a normal silent movie."

For November Five's DVD, Taylor sourced *Nosferatu* from a 35mm print and added appropriate colour tinting. Although no scenes were cut, the elimination of intertitles affects some of the pacing, which Taylor tried to soften with music and minor editorial tweaks. The new dialogue also subjugates the score, which could've supported the film on its own. (The soundtrack album preserves the lengths of each meaty cue and memorable theme.)

YouTube is filled with *Nosferatu* clips overlaid with rap, classical and alternative music. Even Goblin's Claudio Simonetti performed his own score excerpts, live at the Paris Forum des Images in 2002. But it's the addition of dialogue (at times deliberately humorous) that, for some, might make the 2010 version hard to digest.

"I think it works," says a confident Taylor. "Most people I've shown it to have enjoyed it thoroughly, but I've had a few people saying, 'You've peed all over this great classic.'" Before anyone starts grabbing pitchforks and torches, however, they should remember Werner Herzog's 1979 remake/homage, which is basically the same film, shot in full colour, with dialogue and a prog rock score by Popol Vuh.

An all-talking *Nosferatu* is a pretty auspicious debut for a new film scoring entity, but Hobgoblin has good instincts, and the industrial score being written for their next venture, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, might provide the right balance among fans and purists alike. **B**



LAIR OF THE MINOTAUR

Evil Power

THE GRIND-HOUSE RECORDS

It's a testament to the conviction of these Chicagoans that they can drop a gang-shouted chorus such as, "We fucked them all, let's fuck them all again, let's kill these motherfuckers!" ("Let's Kill These Motherfuckers") without a whiff of cheese or a hint of camp.

In fact, the group's metal is so manly, the only thing missing from it are the shrieks of terrified virgins as this conquering horde thunders through their village! The eleven punk-inflected odes to vengeance, slaughter, cannibalism ("Hunt and Devour") and witchcraft ("Blood from the Witch's Vein") that make up this lean, mean album are firmly rooted in the classic Swedish death metal sound of early Unleashed and Entombed, but are also imbued with such personality that they never come across as imitative. More importantly, the quality of the writing is consistent from helmet to boots. Drain your flagon and saddle up, into battle we ride! **GM 3.5/5**

METAL



quotes poet Lord Byron, and lyrical influences from Poe and Lovecraft. Soncify for those with a taste for the theatrical, *Set Sail to Mystery* is suitably available in a beautiful hardcover book version featuring 56 pages of exclusive art and photography. **AVL 3.5/5**



BARREN EARTH

Curse of the Red River
PEACEVILLE RECORDS

The term "supergroup" can be a mixed blessing. On one hand, several thousand prog-metal fans just creamed their jeans at the thought of what alumni of Swallow the Sun, Amorphis, Moonsorrow and Kreator have strung together. On the other, the guys are standing in the shadows of their beloved day jobs. Without reinventing the wheel, Barren Earth has played to its strengths on this debut — a dense and melancholic record

METAL



OMEGA LITHIUM

Dreams in Formaline
AIRCONTACT RECORDS

Call them goth metal, symphonic metal or industrial metal, the common

METAL

denominator of Omega Lithium's sound is metal. Fronted by nineteen-year-old singer Mya Mortensen, this Croatian quartet fits neatly alongside its most obvious influences: Evanescence, Within Temptation and Lacuna Coil. What distinguishes these musicians from their peers is an affinity for EBM and industrial-style synth flourishes, which gives their debut album, *Dreams in Formaline*, an edge on the dance floor. In fact, songs such as "Stigmata" and "Angel's Holocaust" sound like Rammstein fronted by Amy Lee (although Mortensen is not as an accomplished singer as the Evanescence frontwoman). Whether you approve of that description will gauge your interest in these dramatic, guitar-heavy songs — and, caveat emptor, *Dreams in Formaline's* eleven tracks are not entirely dissimilar from one another. That said, we can certainly see spooky girls and boys grooving to Omega Lithium's particular brand of heaviness. **SP 3.5/5**



UNHOLY GRAVE

Grind Killers

SELFMADEGOD RECORDS

Japanese grindcore mongers Unholy Grave (a name taken from the classic Death tune "Beyond the Unholy Grave") issue another raging blast of simplified dirges on their latest 23-track behemoth, *Grind Killers*. Merciless and raw, the band's coupling of political tendencies and physical malice is once again expressed through gruesome lyrics — that is, when one can actually decipher what the fuck they're saying — on tunes such as "Murderer," "Morbid Dark Angels," "Buried Terror" and a hilarious blast version of The Ramones' "Beat on the Brat." Coming across like a twisted amalgam of Obituary's berfone run-

METAL

bling over music reminiscent of early Carcass (before they became prodigious and began recording in a studio that couldn't properly capture bathroom sounds), this is an experience in ultra-low-fidelity discomfort. **KC 3.5/5**



ABSCESS

Dawn of Inhumanity

PEACEVILLE RECORDS

Pigeonholing California's Abscess isn't easy. Straddling death metal, doom and punk, their musical aesthetic is ever-evolving. Toss a deranged pinch of psychedelic influence into the mix and you've got a band (featuring members of Autopsy and Death) with a history rooted in classic gore. Unnerving and unchanged, this eighth album has heaviness in spades, yet it's the experimental atmosphere that really stands out. Opening track "Goddess of Fifth and Plague" begins with 50 seconds of desolate ambience before bursting into a churning storm of speed and guttural riffing, introducing the album's dichotomy of tension and catharsis. "The Rotting Land" evolves from a frenzy of squealing guitars and pulsating drums into a dense, snail-paced dirge, while the layered vocals of Chris Reifert and guitarist Clint Bower sound twisted and blood-thirsty. *Dawn of Inhumanity* is a lot to digest, but ultimately Abscess has created a satisfyingly disturbed, glorious mess of metal. **ED 3.5/5**



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NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD 2
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PLAY DEAD

GRAPHICS ▲

PLAYABILITY ▲

SHIVERS ▲

GAMES REVIEWED BY ANDREW LEE

HIGHEST RATING IS THREE



METRO 2033

THQ
PC, Xbox 360

▲▲▲
▲▲
▲▲
BB BB BB

The Russians have brought us a variety of stuff over the years: Communism, the Cold War, the AK-47 machine gun, vodka and, now, a brand new kick-ass video game.

Based on the best-selling book by Dmitry Glukhovsky, *Metro 2033* immerses players in a post-apocalyptic world where the survivors

have fled into the subway system beneath the ruins of Moscow.

Gamers take on the role of Artyom, a young man raised in the underground labyrinth—a bleak place where the laughter of children is rare and the screams of the dying are all too common. But life on the surface is even worse; over the years the humans and animals that remained topside have become irradiated, mutated monsters that now hunt those who live below as their primary food source. Some have even evolved to attack psychically, leaving their victims writhed, slobbering shells of their former selves.

Armed with a flashlight, gas mask and a variety of guns and melee weapons, players must defend themselves and their compatriots against the creatures, as well as various factions of Communists and neo-Nazis continually vying for control of the tunnels.

This is a gritty first-person shooter absolutely saturated with spurling blood, vicious *Glitch*-esque monsters and gorgeous photo-realistic environments, depicting the kind of desperate, brutal society that would probably arise from the ashes of a nuclear holocaust (well, sans beasts, of course).

Your mission is to save what's left of humanity. Quick, what's Russian for "Dude, you're fucked"?



FRAGILE DREAMS: FAREWELL RUINS OF THE MOON

XSeed Games
Wii

▲▲▲
▲▲
▲▲
BB BB BB

The world is a pretty big place but just imagine how much larger (and scarier) it would seem if you were the only person left alive on the entire planet.

That's the world of *Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon*, an atmospheric *Silent Hill*-style adventure. In it, players embark on a post-apocalyptic journey as a fifteen-year-old boy named Seto, who travels through an abandoned Tokyo on a quest to locate other survivors. You're armed with a flashlight and a bamboo stick, which come in handy for fending off an assortment of feral dogs, demonic hellhounds, malicious spirits and the torso-less bodies (just the legs, actually!) of children who laugh while viciously kicking you.

Effectively combining anime-style characters with realistic environments, this mind-blowing game imparts a staggering sense of isolation and loneliness as your footsteps echo down desolate corridors. It's kind of like being lost in the woods... forever.



DEADLY PREMONITION

Ignition Entertainment
Xbox 360

▲▲
▲
▲
BB BB

FBI agent York Morgan is one seriously screwed-up individual. Not only is he among the Bureau's top criminal profilers, with a special penchant for tracking down killers of young girls, he's also clinically insane and has a split personality that blurs reality at the most inappropriate times.

As Morgan, players are sent to the quaint, remote town of Greenvale to investigate a particularly grisly murder, uncover a conspiracy and be attacked by ghosts, zombies and a sadistic maniac in a reincoat who's armed with a very big axe.

Reminiscent of the earlier *Silent Hill* and *Fatal Frame* games, and eerily evocative of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, *Deadly Premonition* unfortunately suffers from severely dated graphics and a control system that's infuriatingly clunky. So, if you do decide to give this twisted little title a try, don't blame me if, by game's end, you find yourself locked up in a rubber room wearing a straitjacket.

THIS SPOOKY LITTLE GEM IS ONE OF THE BEST MADE-FOR-TELEVISION HORROR FILMS
EVER MADE. - DONAL GUARISCO, AMG REVIEW

THE ORIGINAL CLASSIC

DARK NIGHT-88 SCARECROW

DARK NIGHT OF THE SCARECROW

"Mar-vel-ous! I was terrified!"

— Vincent Price —

DVD

When young Marylee Williams (Tonya Crowe) is found viciously mauled, all hell breaks loose in her small rural town. Officious Post Master Otis P. Hazelrigg (Charles Durning) leads gang of bigots in pursuit of the suspect, her mentally challenged friend Bubba Ritter (Larry Drake). Finding him hiding inside a scarecrow, they exact brutal mob "justice" ... only to discover a tragic mistake! Now a strange apparition stalks the land seeking each of them out, and the legend of the Scarecrow begins.

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CLASSIC CUT

THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN
DIRECTED BY TERENCE FISHER · UK · 1957



MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, in a mountain village in Switzerland, lived a man whose strange experiments with the dead have since become legend.

When those words – written in antique script against a fire-engine red Technicolor background – were flashed on cinema screens across the UK in 1957, filmgoers were unaware they were witnessing the first shot in a war against the stand conventions of the horror film. The picture was *The Curse of Frankenstein*, and though the lurid reds of the intro distinguished it from the atmospheric black and white Universal horror classics of the '30s and '40s, audiences had no idea what was about to hit them. After all, they were familiar with the gentle, brilliant but misguided Doctor Frankenstein, creator of the cinema's most sympathetic monster. And besides, for due notwithstanding, had anything truly horrible ever come out of Switzerland?

Director Terence Fisher's mixed palette of dull greys, browns and flesh tones contrasted with the almost hallucinatory bright colours of Victor Frankenstein's laboratory – bubbling beakers of green, red and blue liquid – which certainly heightened the film's uncanniness and quiet horror. What really put audiences off guard, though, was the depiction of Frankenstein himself, which emphasized his ruthlessness and disregard for human life.

Both in Mary Shelley's original 1818 novel and James Whale's classic 1931 adaptation and its sequels, Frankenstein was an idealistic seeker of knowledge whose experiments with the powers of life unleash a monster on the world. But Fisher, a veteran British director who'd been hired by Hammer Films to do for horror what the company's successful *Quatermass* series was doing for science fiction, had a different Frankenstein in mind. Using Jimmy Sangster's script, Fisher created a very modern scientist: ambitious, devoid of human feeling and utterly contemptuous of conventional morality, a man determined to wring the very secret of life and death from the corpses he steals from the graveyard.

Luckily, Fisher found an actor up to the challenge of reinventing the good doctor: veteran British film and television actor Peter Cushing. The soft-spoken Cushing plays Frankenstein as a calculating, charming sociopath who is honestly dumbfounded by the moral objections of his idealistic assistant, Paul Kravitz (Robert Urquhart, who wants to use their discoveries in reviving dead

tissue to assist surgeons during long operations. Frankenstein wants nothing less than to create a new life form, a superman sewn together from the body parts of the physically powerful and intellectually brilliant. In one unforgettable scene, the doctor methodically picks shards of broken glass from a half-squashed brain – in full view of the camera – and viewers knew this wasn't their parents' Frankenstein.

Fisher's second crucial innovation was to present a monster as inhuman as his creator. He chose Christopher Lee, a relative unknown at the time, to play Frankenstein's creation, mainly because of his unusually tall build. Lee's powerful physical presence, coupled with makeup artist Phil Leakey's grotesque redesign, shocked audiences and critics, who recoiled at the monster's battered flesh, open sores and milky dead eye. Lee turned the monster into a vessel of pure rage and anguish, a murderous brute cursed to defy the limits of nature.

The film broke new ground in its depiction of gore and bodice-popping meekness, innovations not lost on England's film critics. A reviewer for *Tribune* magazine said watching the film was degrading "for anyone who loves the cinema," while C.A. Legume of *The Observer* actually apologized in advance to American viewers on behalf of his nation.

One critic was closer to the mark when he accused the filmmakers of exhibiting a "preoccupation with disgusting – not horrific – chameleyn." The age of the onscreen gross-out had begun, and critics weren't happy about it.

As is often the case, the howls of outrage from guardians of public decency only drove curious moviegoers to the cinemas to check out Fisher's inavogressive spectacle. The movie was a hit in both England and America, where its lurid blend of gore, melodrama, dizzying colours and grotesque symbolism wowed audiences and influenced an entire generation of filmmakers, such as Roger Corman and Martin Scorsese, not to mention just about every Italian horror director for the next 30 years.

Not lost on Hammer Films executives was Cushing and Lee's onscreen chemistry. The two were soon paired in an even more daring reinvention of a classic movie monster – Fisher's *Dracula* – and nothing would ever be the same, now that British horror had revealed its realer side.

JAMES GRANGER

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- Film Critic Richard Roeper



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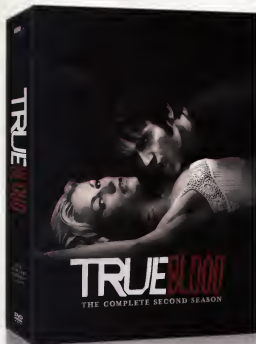
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